

HR Update

STATE OF ALASKA
DIVISION OF PERSONNEL
AND LABOR RELATIONS
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HR.....SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS.



Alaska Division of Tourism

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HR UPDATE

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

Please let us know what you think of our publication. If you have any suggestions about how to improve the HR Update or topics you think should be addressed, please contact franklin.hurt@alaska.gov.

State of Alaska Time & Attendance System Naming Contest

By Deanna Lewis

After receiving numerous submissions for the State of Alaska Time and Attendance System Naming Contest, the Steering Committee selected their top choice for this new system. The winning name is ASSET, which stands for "Alaska Statewide System for Employee Time." The name was inspired by Young Ha, a Readiness Unit Manager with the Department of Environmental Conservation.

The dictionary description for asset is "a useful and desirable thing or quality." ASSET is a symbol of positive changes for the State of

Alaska, as we embrace and evolve from our current paper manual timesheet processing methods to an on-line, paperless time collection and reporting system. ASSET also includes the automation of consistent business rules for all State agencies and will interface with the State of Alaska Payroll system (AKPAY) to produce that basic necessity called a paycheck. ASSET is the channel to compensate each State of Alaska employee, and the ASSET name expresses the importance and significant value each employee contributes to the State of Alaska. Thanks to Young Ha for this appropriate name choice as we work toward the goals for this time collecting and calculating system to create pay for all State of Alaska employees.

The next step is to design a logo for ASSET. This task will go to a graphic designer who will develop a logo appropriate to the name. Thanks to all who participated in the contest and special thanks to the ASSET Agency Liaisons for gathering the submissions for each department.

Holiday Season and the Workplace

By Camille Brill

Did you know there are over 30 religious, state, national and cultural holidays during the months of October through February?

Wintertime in Alaska is wonderful! It's also when many State of Alaska employees take some time to spend with each other that isn't "all work": we socialize; we decorate; we have a

party. Hopefully, we get to know each other better and even celebrate our work successes.

Because of the depth of diversity in our workforce and in our State, it's also a good time to remind ourselves that not everyone shares our religious beliefs or cultural background. (Even people in the same religion can celebrate religious holidays differently.) This is also the time of year when Human Resource folks start fielding questions such as:

- My supervisor asked me to organize the office Christmas party. I'm not Christian and I don't want to organize or go to the party. Do I have to? What do I say to my boss?
- My religious beliefs don't allow me to participate in holiday gift exchanges, but I'm concerned that if I don't participate my boss will think I'm not a team player. What should I do?

For many people, things like parties and presents in the workplace are "nonissues" while others feel strongly about them. Some people feel the "PC police" are taking over and being ridiculous while others don't understand why people can't just be respectful and polite. There's the debate whether "Christmas" is a Christian celebration or a secular American holiday or both. Some holidays are deeply significant to some employees while others don't know anything about them. Veteran's Day may be extremely meaningful to me, but I don't celebrate Thanksgiving. Or perhaps my family and friends have important gatherings on Martin Luther

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King Jr. Day, but you don't. Since many people have not had consistent interactions with people of all faiths, cultures, races, or nationalities, it is all too easy even for well-intentioned individuals to inadvertently offend their coworkers at this time of year. The answer is to be open and to build understanding and awareness about others especially when planning and participating in work events during the holiday season.

Office celebrations

Work-sponsored events should be fun, safe, inclusive, and professional. Here are some things to consider:

- Be creative and solicit party ideas from everyone in the workplace. Pick a party theme that is truly inclusive, a theme that everyone can appreciate and enjoy.
- Pick a party time that makes the most sense in your work unit. December may be a very busy time for your particular workplace. November, January, or February may be a better time when more people can participate. Or maybe your work unit could decide to have several smaller celebrations throughout the year instead of one big one.
- Everyone should be invited to a work-sponsored party, but attendance should be truly voluntary. There are a number of protected reasons why people may choose not to participate.
- Have fun at the party! Get to know your coworkers. Make a point to talk to people that you don't know or don't regularly see. Nobody regrets finding out their coworkers are actually multi-faceted human beings.

Cards, invitations, and decorations in the workplace

If supervisors allow a reasonable

amount of holiday decorating of office spaces, avoid endorsing or supporting a particular religious observance in holiday decorations or holiday cards / invitations. Workplace decorations should be something that everyone -- employees and visitors -- can enjoy.

Presents

Giving presents in the workplace as part of a work-sponsored event may be fun and morale-building, but they can also lead to misunderstandings or hurt feelings. Supervisors and managers should carefully consider whether to sponsor gift exchanges; and if so, set parameters. The cost of even small gifts is a hardship for some. Some gag gifts, especially those in poor taste, can be offensive. Gift exchanges should be called names like "Gift Auction" or "White Elephant Gift Exchange."

The Bottom Line

Everyone should feel welcome in the workplace and at work-sponsored events. That is why we encourage an inclusive approach to celebrating the holiday season in the work place.

If you have any questions about issues arising from your workplace holiday happenings, please seek guidance from your supervisor, manager, or Management Services staff.

The State of Alaska Diversity Value Statement:

"The State of Alaska, as an employer and service provider, recognizes the need

to respect and treat equally all people it hires and serves. We also recognize that the State is in a position to teach by example and offer leadership in sensitivity to diversity. Our concept of diversity is broad, extending beyond those categories of peoples formally recognized and protected by law. Valuing the diversity of a workforce representative of all Alaskans enriches the quality of our service to the people of Alaska."

Family Leave Frequently Asked Questions

By Sherilyn Knight

The Family Leave Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document was updated to reflect revisions to the Federal Family Leave Act in 2009. The revised version of the FAQ is located at the Human Resources Forms page under Family Leave <http://dop.state.ak.us/resources/hrforms>.

The 2009 revisions to the FMLA regulations incorporated two new military family leave entitlements for family members of military service personnel (Qualifying Exigency Leave and Military Caretaker Leave). Other revisions to the regulations:

- increased the time period for the employer notice obligation;
- clarified the employee notice obligation;
- clarified the medical certification



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process concerning the HIPAA privacy rule

- modified the employee's eligibility threshold;
- removed categorical penalty provisions and clarified where an employee suffers individualized harm because the employer failed to follow the notification rules, the employer may be liable;
- modified the definition of a serious health condition;
- clarified that light duty does not count toward the FMLA entitlement; and
- codified the practice that employees may voluntarily settle or release their past FMLA claims without court or department approval.

These revisions do not change the process to designate family leave. Employee and supervisors can continue to have FMLA questions answered by their HR Service Center staff. Comprehensive Family Leave information is also located at <http://dop.state.ak.us/serviceCenters/familyLeave>.

Filling Records Requests

By Carol McLeod

Many times, supervisors and managers will get a request from an outside agency for an employee's supervisory, personnel, and/or medical file. Often, this request has been sent to various people at multiple locations, including the Human Resources Service Centers and the Employee Planning and Information Center.

In order to ensure that any information that is being provided follows all statutory and regulatory guidelines, please forward all records requests to the Employee Planning and Information Center (EPIC). EPIC will coordinate the collection and dissemination of all appropriate records

and will respond to the requestor from its central location. If you get a request from an outside agency, please do not respond. Send the request to EPIC or to your HR Service Center.

As a supervisor or manager, you may be asked by the Human Resources Manager in your Service Center to supply copies of various records to EPIC to use for this purpose. Please provide the copies in a timely manner, since this information will be used to answer requests from outside agencies.

If you have questions, please contact the employee call center at 465-3009.

The Class Study & Position Description Submission

By Pam Day

The Division of Personnel and Labor Relations (DOP&LR) conducts a job classification (class) study to establish new job classes or change part or all of the definition, distinguishing characteristics, class concepts, class series structure, or salary-range assignments of one or more existing job classes. A class study may impact only one division or involve positions from every department of the State, and likewise may vary in scope from a single, unique position to hundreds of related positions spread across the state. Along this continuum, a class study may take only a few days to complete, or it may require the concentrated, ongoing joint efforts of numerous DOP&LR and agency staff over many months. In either situation, class studies are a carefully orchestrated collaborative process between agencies and DOP&LR.

What can I do to prepare for a class study?

As your department prepares to submit position descriptions (PDs) for the study, you can assist by ensuring that your position description (PD) is currently in the Online Position Description system

(OPD). If your PD is not in OPD you need to create a PD submission according to your department procedures. Or if your job/work has changed since your PD was last submitted to OPD, you would then need to update your PD and submit prior to the study deadline for PD submissions.

Taking these steps in advance will greatly help with the timely processing of a class study.

To access Classification Study and Maintenance Request forms and procedures, please visit the following website: <http://dop.state.ak.us/classification/forms>

Classification Section – Class Study Updates

Active Studies:

- Workers' Compensation Officer and Technician
- Equal Employment Opportunity Officer
- Eligibility Technician and Workforce Development Specialist
- Program Coordinator Study Phase 2 (project manager) and Phase 3 (outliers)
- Regulatory Commission of Alaska job classes

Recently Completed Studies:

- Petroleum Economic Policy Analyst, effective 10/16/09
- Assistant State Petroleum Property Assessor, effective 9/14/09
- Accounting Study Part 3: Accountants; Accounting Supervisor II; State Accountant, effective 8/16/09

For more information on Class Studies visit <http://dop.state.ak.us/classification/main>