

Ensure a safe holiday party; observe a few Do's and Don'ts

Is a holiday season party in the works at your organization? If so, some careful planning can make the difference between a happy holiday event and harrowing one. In particular, we urge employers to eliminate alcohol from the event or — at a minimum — take steps to diminish the many risks associated with alcohol consumption at these events.

Holiday Party DO's

Here are some helpful hints designed to keep your party happy and healthy:

- Hold the voluntary event during non-working hours
- Keep the purpose of the function purely social
- Make clear to employees whom they may invite
- Locate the party at a hotel or restaurant, rather than your own premises
- Maintain a reasonably safe and hazard-free environment, watching for slipping or tripping hazards
- Be considerate of the broad array of religions reflected in the American workplace and the associated dietary considerations that may apply
- Make sure employees are aware that the company's policies such as those addressing substance abuse or sexual harassment apply to company events as well
- Ensure managers and supervisors understand that even at the party, they are responsible for the enforcement of these policies
- If alcohol is to be served, utilize the services of a trained bartender and instruct wait staff to limit the number of drinks served, *especially* to those who appear to be intoxicated
- Check identification of all those consuming alcohol
- Close the bar 90 minutes before the end of the party and serve a dessert treat with coffee before people leave
- Provide an assortment of foods rich in starch and protein, which stay in the stomach longer and slow the absorption of alcohol in to the bloodstream (vegetables and dips, cheeses, finger sandwiches)
- Provide an assortment of non-alcoholic drinks
- Make sure employees know drinking and driving is unacceptable
- Provide safe transportation to and from the party such as taxicabs, rented busses or designated drivers or arrange for discounted rooms when a party is held at a hotel so employees will not drive home impaired

Holiday Party DON'Ts

- Do not hold the party during business hours or schedule employees to return to work immediately following a celebration, especially where alcohol is consumed
- Do not require attendance
- Do not allow or ignore harassing or belligerent behavior on the part of employees or supervisors
- Do not allow unlimited alcohol consumption
- Do not allow guests to mix their own drinks
- Do not provide only salty, greasy or sweet food, which makes people thirsty
- Do not allow employees to drive after consuming alcohol, especially in company vehicles
- Do not serve alcohol to minors or allow others to provide it