



# Keeping Things “Cool” in the Workplace this Summer – 5 Tips to Boost Employee Engagement

Insights

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Here we are already – it’s peak summer and employers are in the throes of managing all the various challenges summer brings. Parents are juggling summer childcare issues, vacation requests are rolling in, and the weather may pose its own set of hazards (cue intense heat, summer storms, etc.). July is a great time to take a look at your company’s policies and determine whether implementing a summer protocol/plan makes sense to keep employees engaged and productive during the summer months. Here are five quick ways you can support your employees this summer:

**1. Review your heat-safety guidance and weather policy.** OSHA announced its proposed rule on Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and indoor Work Settings on July 2. It would require covered employers to implement a comprehensive Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Plan, designate “heat safety coordinators,” among other requirements. Though OSHA will have an uphill battle pushing this rule through given the recent SCOTUS decision overturning the *Chevron* doctrine (and other political hurdles), it’s still smart to anticipate some federal heat safety requirements in the future – and follow these 10 steps to protect your workers in the summer. Of course, taking good care of your employees is a good business decision too.

It’s also a great time to make sure that you have a clear inclement weather policy in place so that employees know precisely what to expect during those unpredictable summer storms and hurricanes. When nature causes an office shutdown, don’t forget that all exempt employees will need to be paid their full salary if they performed any work during the workweek (though employers may request that the employee use available PTO to cover the absence). It is not necessary to pay non-exempt employees for office closings, but non-exempt employees may use PTO to cover their absence. Remember hurricane days and snow days in school? You may want to consider following suit and building in a few extra PTO days for non-exempt employees to use when severe weather prevents them from getting to the office, or for office closures.

**2. Be flexible when you can.** For employees who are able to perform their work outside of the office, consider a summer hybrid schedule to ease some of the financial burdens parents may face with the increased need for childcare during working hours. Many companies participate in “Summer Fridays” where offices are either fully remote on Fridays or close at noon. Even if remote work or hybrid schedules are not in place during the rest of the year, providing some greater flexibility during the summer can be a real benefit for parents with school-age children. As the price of

childcare increases nationwide, working remote even a day or two during the summer can mean significant savings for parents.

Of course, weather concerns (again!) may prevent employees from accessing the office (i.e., flooding). Implementing a clear work-from-home policy ensures that the company doesn't skip a beat even during severe weather events. Oh, and don't forget the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and other state leave laws which may apply if parents need to stay home with their children who may have health issues that are exacerbated in the summer or who have special needs.

**3. Consider implementing summer wellness challenges or group activities to keep employees engaged.** We know how critical employee engagement and morale is for talent acquisition and retention. Summer presents some great opportunities to get employees active with fun team-building activities, like hiking, kayaking, beach volleyball, cycling, team picnics in the park, etc. Summer will be gone before you know it – get outside and encourage your team to take part in some outdoor activities. Keep attendance at these extracurricular events voluntary and review your policies to make sure that all of your legal bases are covered (consider whether waivers are necessary, reinforce that workplace policies are still effective even when “off-site,” etc.).

**4. Make sure you have clear vacation and absence policies – and actually enforce them.** While crafting a clear vacation/leave/absence policy is critical at all points during the year, summer inevitably brings an influx of vacation requests. Make sure your policy provides for ample advance notice for vacation requests and make it clear that paying for a vacation or having “time in the bank” does not automatically ensure that the employee's vacation request will be granted. Consider implementing a first-come-first-served basis for team members in the same department so that there are no lapses in delivering timely service and products to customers and clients. This will also encourage employees to get their requests in well before summer rolls around.

**5. Stay vigilant about dress codes.** No matter where you are in the country, summer usually means shorts, tank tops, and sandals – typical “no-no's” in most workplaces. While employers certainly can consider relaxing dress codes during the summer, like anything else, make sure the policy is consistently enforced across genders, races, national origins, and any other protected classes. If there are no changes in dress code for the summer, now may be a good time to send a gentle reminder of workplace expectations.

## **Conclusion**

We will continue to monitor developments related to all aspects of workplace law. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. If you have questions, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney or the author of this Insight.

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