

Employers' Liability Claims - Changes

"Changes have been made to how employers' liability claims are handled. Don't get caught out"

The changes took on 31/07/13 and are intended to:- (1)Reduce the costs incurred in employers' liability & public liability claims (2)Improve the speed with which claims are handled. Any EL claim up to £250,000 will be handled through the online "Claims Portal". The new system has a fixed cost regime with tighter timescales & tough non-compliance penalties.

The 3 year claims window still applies but rather than hear from a solicitor about a claim, you can expect to hear via your insurer. Insurers will have only 30 days to confirm or deny liability (reduced from 90). Failure to comply will result in heavy legal costs.

Tips When there is a workplace accident:- (1) Inspect the scene including equipment, photograph it (2)Take copies of any CCTV footage & secure the premises/ defective equipment (3)Take full signed statements from the employee & witnesses (4) Complete accident report forms in full detail (5)Notify the HSE if applicable & keep a copy (6) Assess any earnings losses.

Business Energy Contracts - Auto Rollover

"The practice by energy companies of automatically rolling over small business energy contracts is coming to an end"

Five of the UK's largest energy providers have agreed to end the practice of automatically rolling over energy contracts without the agreement of the business concerned. Often resulting in the business being locked into a further 12 month contract with price hikes that have not been agreed. British Gas, EDF, SSE & EON have all agreed to end this practice following a 5 year campaign by Federation for Small Businesses (FSB).

Contracts for business regularly last for 1 to 3 years & are often automatically renewed if the business does not contact the provider to re-negotiate/switch, unlike domestic contracts. The FSB reports 25% of small businesses have been caught in this trap & welcomes the changes meaning 4m small businesses will no longer risk being locked in to energy contracts.

Scottish Recovery Gains Ground

"The rate of the Scottish economic recovery is improving reports The Bank of Scotland (BOS)"

Figures show record business activity growth but the rate of growth continues to be below the remainder of the UK. BOS & Markit PMI reports show:-

- **Business Output** – The service sector experienced its largest monthly improvement since May 2007, with manufacturing having its 2nd largest monthly growth in over 2 years.
- **Employment in the private sector** – Experienced its fastest growth for over 6 years.
- **Business activity** – New business growth has resulted from additional marketing efforts & higher levels of confidence.

The Food & Drink sector is expected to continue its strong performance during the next 5 years creating a possible 5.600 extra jobs & is expected to beat a £12.5b target by 2017.

Protect Yourself Against Ex-Employees

"An ex-employee was recently convicted of defrauding his ex-employer & a competitor of nearly £72,000. How?"

When an employee leaves, whatever the circumstances, always ensure that all keys, security IDs, mobiles & computer equipment are handed in. Erase all logons, passwords and e-mail addresses unless you need to retain the latter; in which case have e-mails re-directed to a colleague. It's also a good idea to make sure you have the ex-employees current contact details in case you need to track them down.

Case-in-point: In a recent case Reece Scobie (S) who worked for Thomson Travel (TT) left after 2 weeks but TT failed to carry out the necessary housekeeping & S was able to rack up £12,000 on flights & hotels for himself & his friends. He was also able to defraud Cambridge Travel (CT) of £59,878 when an employee of CT failed to properly log out of a public computer in a business lounge. Because the activities involved were normal for the type of business it was some time before the frauds were discovered.
Tip: As well as good housekeeping, don't allow employees to use public computers unless it's an emergency

Extra Support for Entrepreneurs

"The gov has pledged an extra £69m to support start-ups & small business growth"

The measures are intended to encourage the emergence of tens of thousands of start-up businesses. New funding will be provided through a number of resources including:-

- Additional funding for The New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) providing support & funding for start-ups by the unemployed with the aim to help 60,000 people.
- The Start-up Loan Scheme – a support & funding scheme for 18-30 yr olds will receive £34m for business start-ups who typically receive £4,500.

Prime Minister David Cameron commented "My message is simple, if you have drive, determination & are prepared to work hard, we will back you". Figures show that 6,000 '50 or overs' have taken used the NEA scheme, so its not just for the young.

Most Enterprising Place– Burnley in Lancs.

" Burnley in Lancashire has won the title of 'Most Enterprising Place in the UK'"

The town earned the title due to its "Ongoing support & commitment to small & medium sized businesses and for improving the town's perception. The Burnley Bondholders Scheme consists of over 100 local businesses who have come together to promote business in Burnley & have achieved £10m of inward investment for the area. Burnley Council commented that the town continues to outperform & have big ambitions building on its reputation for manufacturing excellence, particularly in aerospace. Plans are underway for an aerospace supply village, a regeneration of an old Michelin tyre factory site.

Burnley will represent the UK at the European Enterprise Promotion Awards being held in Lithuania in November.