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Monthly Newsletter

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New Coronavirus Relief Laws Require Paid Employee Leave

As part of [sweeping legislation](#) signed into law by President Trump on March 18, 2020, two laws were enacted that provide workers with paid leave for reasons related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



One of the new leave provisions, the “Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act,” allows 12 weeks of partially compensated FMLA leave to care for a child whose school or child care facility has been closed due to COVID-19. The leave applies only to workers who have been employed by their current employer for 30 days.

The other new law providing employee leave, the “Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act,” requires employers to provide 80 hours of paid sick time to employees in specified circumstances, including:

- A quarantine or isolation order for the employee or someone the employee is caring for, or medical advice to self-quarantine;
- When the employee has symptoms of COVID-19; or
- When the employee’s child’s school or child care facility is closed.

Employers with 500 employees or more are exempt from the laws, and employers may exclude employees who are health care providers and emergency responders. The legislation also allows for future regulations exempting businesses with fewer than 50 employees from providing leave for child care reasons if the leave would jeopardize the viability of the business.

The laws take effect within 15 days of passage; the leave benefits will expire on Dec. 31, 2020.

Tax Day Moved to July 15

The Treasury Department and the IRS issued new guidance related to federal tax payments and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).



According to the guidance, “all individual and other non-corporate tax filers” can defer federal tax payments of up to \$1 million until July 15, 2020, (normally April 15) without interest or penalties. Corporations have a similar deferment option of up to \$10 million.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the tax filing deadline would also move to July 15, giving Americans three more months than the original deadline. He stressed that individuals should file sooner rather than later if they wished to see a tax return in a timely fashion. The administration says this guidance will result in nearly \$300 billion of additional liquidity in the economy.

What's next?

Employers don't need to make any changes at the moment. This guidance is intended to help reduce the economic burden of COVID-19, so employers may take advantage of this new deferment option as they see fit. The IRS and Treasury Department said they will continue to update policies and issue additional guidance as needed during this time of crisis.

Easing Employee Stress Surrounding the Coronavirus Pandemic

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which was first detected in Wuhan, China in late December 2019, has now spread to over 150 countries, including the United States.



As the number of confirmed cases increases daily, employers, employees and their families are experiencing immense uncertainty. In uncertain times such as these, employees are looking for guidance wherever they can find it. Employers can help calm some of their employees' fears by taking the following actions:

- Acknowledge employee fears surrounding their jobs and the company, but also reassure them of their value to the company and the company's desire to keep them as members of the team.
- Be open with employees about management decisions and ask for suggestions to rectify problems.
- Provide as much information as possible about the pandemic.
- Highlight employee benefits that employees might not know about to relieve any financial stress.
- Encourage employees to take advantage of any telemental health services to preserve their mental well-being.
- Communicate the future of the business with employees often—in meetings, on the company intranet site, in newsletters and in blogs.
- Be empathetic in your communications, as every employee's situation may be different.

In these uncertain times, it's imperative that you clearly communicate your business's plans as frequently as possible. It's not possible for you to control the pandemic, but it is possible for you to help ease the stress your employees are experiencing.

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