



**JMT &
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Human Resources & Safety Consulting

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PEOPLE POINTERS

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****NEW POSTER****

A revised Federal minimum wage poster, reflecting the recently enacted minimum wage increases, is now available free of charge on the Department of Labor's Web site. Every employer of employees subject to the Fair Labor Standard Act's minimum wage provisions must post, and keep posted, a notice explaining the Act in a conspicuous place in all of their establishments so as to permit employees to readily read it.

Effective July 24, 2007, the federal minimum wage for covered non-exempt employees will be \$5.85 per hour. The minimum wage increases to \$6.55 per hour effective July 24, 2008; and \$7.25 per hour effective July 24, 2009.

A separate provision of the recently-passed law brings about phased increases to the minimum wage in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, with the goal of bringing the minimum wage in those locations up to the general federal minimum wage over a number of years.

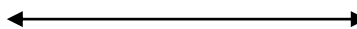
Many states also have minimum wage laws. Covered employers must comply with both.

The tip credit provisions of the FLSA remain the same. An employer is still required to pay

\$2.13 an hour in direct wages if that amount plus the tips received equals at least the Federal minimum wage, provided the employer has informed the employee of the tip credit being taken, the employee retains all tips except to the extent they participate in a valid tip pooling arrangement, and the employee customarily and regularly receives more than \$30 a month in tips.

The youth minimum wage also remains the same. Employees under 20 years of age may be paid \$4.25 per hour.

For more information, call the U.S. Department of Labor's toll-free help line at 1-866-4US-WAGE (487-9243) or visit <http://www.wagehour.dol.gov>.



Managers Need To Model Taking Time Off

By: Sandra Kay Neal, Ph.D.,
Industrial Organizational Psychologist

Summer is the usual time for taking vacations, but vacations can occur at any time. Vacations are essential to keeping employees (and managers) refreshed and focused on the work task. We all need breaks away from work.

To ensure that the business continues to run effectively

during vacation time, it is essential to plan ahead. Managers need to look at the flow of the work and note those times of the year when it is lightest. Those are the times to have vacations. Managers can highlight the best times for taking vacations, often giving employees the appropriate weeks in writing.

It is then helpful for the executive to ask mid-level managers to plan their vacation times together to ensure that someone is always in the office. Mid-level managers can then do the same with their departments. This cooperative approach ensures that employees recognize the value of taking time off while at the same time planning for coverage during someone's off time.

There is a tendency to think that people on vacation should check in with the office while gone. This is destructive of the health (both mental and physical) of employees and should be discouraged. Only in the case of emergencies should anyone be contacted during their time off.

Managers need to model this "no work on vacation" policy. If they say this to others but check in daily themselves, they undermine the value of break time. Managers who have prepared their employees ahead of time should trust their



employees while they are away from the office.

Managers then need to enforce this “no work on vacation” policy when their employees are gone. If there has been effective planning for the vacation times, the business should run smoothly during those vacation weeks and everyone will return refreshed and ready to focus their energies on the task.



Employee Performance Appraisals – Part 2

By: John M. Turner, Ph.D.,
President & CEO

This article continues our series on employee performance appraisals. Previous articles have appeared in our past newsletters.

An effective performance appraisal must use relevant criteria that focus on the employee’s important job aspects. For example, measuring a lawn technician’s customer feedback rating may be more important than simply counting the number of yards that were mowed. When designing the criteria, it is important not to overlook some of the key job duties as well as not including irrelevant criteria. A good job description will be a valuable tool when designing the performance appraisal. It is also important not to single out and over emphasize a select few of the job criteria.

The expected level of performance is defined by using performance standards. These are sometimes referred to as benchmarks, goals, or targets. It is critical that the performance standards are measurable, obtainable, and clearly understood. Properly communicated performance standards ensure that both the supervisor and the employee both understand the expectations. It is acceptable to use both numerical and non-numerical performance standards. The most successful performance standards are a result of the input from both the employee and the supervisor. This joint effort will lead to a much more meaningful appraisal.

Effective performance appraisals must accomplish three major purposes:

1. Legal compliance and documentation.
2. Administrative uses.
3. Developmental uses.

Performance appraisals must be job related. Courts have ruled in numerous cases that performance appraisals were discriminatory and not job related. There are also legal concerns with using forced distribution rating systems. This type of system requires supervisors to rate a certain percent of their employees as “outstanding,” another percent as “satisfactory,” and another percent as “needs improvement.” If you intend to use this type of system, you should contact your

labor council for specific advice. The bottom line is your appraisal system should be both fair and non-discriminatory. Some of the key elements of an effective appraisal system include the following:

- Performance appraisal criteria based on job analysis.
- Absence of disparate impact and evidence of validity.
- Formal evaluation criteria that limit supervisor discretion.
- A rating instrument linked to job duties and responsibilities.
- Proper documentation.
- Supervisor training.
- A multi-step review process.
- Offering counseling to poor performers.

There are three basic administrative uses of appraisals. These include:

1. Determining pay adjustments.
2. Making job placement decisions; such as, promotions, transfers, and demotions.
3. Choosing employee disciplinary actions.

Many companies link employee’s pay to their job performance. This practice affirms the idea that pay raises are given for performance accomplishments rather than based on length of service or granted automatically to all employees doing the same job. Many employees complain that the amount of their pay raise is



not connected to their performance. Some companies are taking a different approach. The appraisal and the pay adjustment are separated into two different events. There are two main reasons for taking this approach. One is that employees often focus more on the pay amount received than on the appraisal feedback. The focus is distracted from how well they are performing their job and what they can do to improve their performance. The second reason is that supervisors sometimes manipulate appraisal ratings to justify the pay raise they want to give to their employee. In this system, the supervisor conducts the appraisal and then several weeks later another meeting is held to discuss the pay issue. This gives the employee time to focus on the content of the appraisal.

The third major use of the appraisal deals with developmental uses. Future development of the company is based on the information provided by the appraisals. Some of the key information includes:

- Employee strengths.
- Employee weaknesses.
- Employee potential.
- Training needs.
- Employee feedback.
- Employee development.

The supervisor's role is to discuss good performance, explain what improvements are necessary and show employees how to improve. The purpose of this feedback is both to reinforce

satisfactory performance and to address areas of deficiency. The development function of appraisals can identify areas in which the employee may wish to grow.

We will continue our discussion of employee performance appraisals in future articles. Future topics will include:

- Who conducts the appraisals?
- Methods for appraising performance.
- Supervisor training issues.
- Appraisal feedback.



Respirators – Who needs them?

By: The Safety Department



Respirators, why do we need them? It's just one more thing I have to do and it interrupts my routine. I can get more done if I don't stop to put it on or clean it at the end of the day.

I'm sure anyone in charge of safety has heard these same comments from time to time. Well, let's see if we can give our employees some good reasons why they might want to rethink their attitude toward respirators.

There are numerous chemicals that employees use every day that can create respiratory hazards. Let's look at some examples.

Many industries create wood dust as part of their process. Studies have been done targeting careers in woodworking and exposure to wood dust which conclude that woodworking apparently increases the chances of developing not only nasal cancer but also lung cancer. The investigators found that the risk of lung cancer was three times higher for subjects involved in wood dust related occupations and industries. In one particular study, for all categories of wood dust exposure, the risk was increased by 60 percent compared with no exposure.

Each type of wood has different effects, while the finishing materials used on wood create their own hazard. Below are some examples you may want to share with your employees:

Hardwoods: Dust inhalation may cause pneumonia, skin irritations and possible nasal cancer.

Softwoods: Dust inhalation may cause nasal irritation and possible nasal cancer.

Plywood or composition board: This type of wood usually contains formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is highly toxic and releases toxic gases.

Glues: Moderately toxic to highly toxic, depending on type.



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Solvents: Moderately toxic to highly toxic when inhaled, depending on type. Flammable and/or corrosive.

Paints and finishes: Moderately toxic when inhaled. Flammable.

Air Monitoring: The first step an employer should take is to conduct air monitoring tests to determine the level of chemicals in the air where workers perform their jobs. This test will determine if you must implement a “mandatory” respiratory program. Even if you are not required to have a respiratory program, it is generally a good idea to implement a “voluntary” respiratory program.

Written Policy: There should be a written standard operating procedure for respirator use, including the following information.

Medical Evaluation: The employer shall provide a medical evaluation to determine an employee’s ability to use a respirator in the workplace before the employee is fit tested or required to use the respirator in the workplace. This applies to the voluntary use of a respirator as well. The employer must identify a physician or licensed health care professional to perform medical evaluations using a medical questionnaire or an initial medical examination that obtains the same information as the medical questionnaire. There is no requirement for an annual medical evaluation. However, the standard requires additional

medical evaluations be provided if an employee reports signs or symptoms related to the ability to use a respirator. A re-evaluation should be performed if a change occurs in workplace conditions or if there is a substantial increase in the physical load placed on an employee.

Fit-Testing is required initially and whenever respirator design or facial changes occur that could affect the proper fit of the respirator. A fit test must also be given on an annual basis. Fit testing does not apply to a voluntary respirator program.

Training must be provided to employees who are required to use or voluntarily use respirators. Training must ensure that each employee can demonstrate knowledge of at least the following:

- Why the respirator is necessary.
- How improper fit, usage, or maintenance can compromise the protective effect of the respirator.
- What the limits and capabilities of the respirator are.
- How to use the respirator in emergency situations.
- How to inspect, wear and remove, use, and check the seals of the respirator.
- Procedures for maintenance and storage of the respirator.

- How to recognize medical signs and symptoms that may limit or prevent the effective use of respirators.

Training must be performed prior to an employee’s first respirator use and at least annually thereafter.

Recordkeeping: Employers are required to retain all medical evaluation records and a copy of the current fit test record for each respirator user.

So, have we answered your questions?

Why do you need them? **To protect lives.**

It’s just one more thing I have to do and it interrupts my routine. **Time isn’t the issue, your health and welfare is the issue.**

I can get more done if I don’t stop to put it on or clean it at the end of the day. **You can’t get anything done if you’re in a hospital or sick at home.**

Know your responsibilities as an employer. Educate your employees and enforce the regulations.

It can save lives.



Getting The Most From Middle Managers

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Do your middle managers really have fifteen years (or more) of experience; or, do they have one year of experience fifteen times over? Using their learned technical skills and innate abilities, these individuals have often worked their way up through the ranks to a position that must now regularly meet with and be accountable to senior management.

But too often these managers merely take last year's budget, add volume and inflationary adjustments, and resubmit the numbers as the answer to next year's fiscal concerns. There's no real "stretch factor" involved. They do well at what they do, but it's all too often only an iteration of what they've done before.

It was good enough for the past fifteen years, why not now? In today's professional arena, there are higher expectations for efficiencies, productivity, and resource utilization. Every organization faces pressures to cut costs, save money and create a greater return-on-investment. Everyone is expected to contribute her or his all to the effort. How can you inspire middle managers to move ahead?

Expectations at your organization. Take an objective look at what needs to change. Are expectations the same as last year with just a "plus factor", or is exploration and entrepreneurship encouraged? Several

organizations have insisted their tenured managers make periodic site visits to other non-competing facilities. They are guided to look for improvements that can readily be brought back and applied at their facility. Some very progressive organizations send their managers out to supplier industries to observe and learn what they do that works more effectively or efficiently. It's surprising how much can be applied across industries.

Seek a fresh opinion. When is the last time you invited one of your trusted peers over for a tour, review, then critique and conversation? These colleagues don't have to be a competitor; just far enough away to be insightful and see the forest through the trees.

Help from a coach. Frequently an experienced coach can guide a manager to think differently and creatively. After completing an initial assessment, a coach can assist a manager to address: non-productive behavior; lack of leadership; poor decision making; and/or listening, communications, or problem solving skills. Often just a few sessions, with appropriate follow-up, are what it takes to bring about a significant change behavior and improved performance.

Expectations from today's workers and management run high. Those middle managers that deliver a significant return-on-investment from scarce resources year after year will be

the most effective leaders now and in the future.



SURVEY

The Benefit of Benefits

In a survey of 1,202 full-time workers, 71% said workplace benefits were a reason for joining their current employer, and 82% said it is a factor for remaining there

Source:
MetLife, New York



ABOUT US

JMT & Associates, LLC is a full service Human Resources (HR) and safety solutions provider. We partner with small, mid-size, and large companies to develop and improve HR processes and procedures. We offer extensive "real-world" experience in a variety of industries, including: manufacturing, service, union, union-free, profit, not-for-profit, private, and public sectors. Our level of involvement ranges from complete management of your HR needs to providing project-based assistance to your in-house HR person, depending on your specific business requirements. These services range from basic policy development to in-depth HR strategic planning. We begin with a comprehensive HR assessment of your current policies



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and procedures, then we provide a detailed analysis and a "road-map of recommendations" to maximize your HR investment. We then provide the necessary follow-up to ensure process effectiveness.

Areas of Expertise: Coaching & Leadership Development, Compensation & Benefits, HR & Safety Compliance, Diversity, Employee Relations, General HR, HR Assessments, HR Policies & Procedures, HR Strategy & Planning, Labor Relations, Organizational Development, Performance Management, Job Analysis, Job Descriptions, Employee Assessments, and a variety of HR & Safety Training courses.

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