



Don't let accidents spoil your workplace Christmas party

Workplace Christmas parties are a great way to boost morale, build team spirit, say thank you for the past year's work and celebrate the Christmas/New Year season, but this can all be spoiled if something goes wrong, so be prepared, says Gosha chairman **Andrew Mills**



WORKPLACE Christmas parties can be great fun and are intended to be enjoyed by all who take part. But sometimes the fun and enjoyment are spoiled because something goes wrong and someone gets hurt.

So it's good to be prepared, to have a think before the event about what could go wrong and potential hazards, and to eliminate or mitigate the hazards in advance of the event (carry out a risk assessment).

And the hazards you identify can be made worse by excessive alcohol consumption or inappropriate behaviour, which guests may not be used to.

As an employer, it's essential to take steps to prevent accidents/incidents and ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all who attend. If you arrange a workplace party or event for staff, Guernsey law expects the same standard of care to be taken as with any other workplace activities.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

Workplace parties can present unique challenges, including:

- Excessive alcohol consumption: uncontrolled drinking can lead to accidents, injuries, and inappropriate behaviour.
- Inappropriate behaviour: harassment, bullying, or other forms of misconduct can create a hostile or uncomfortable environment for everyone present.
- Fun activities: have a think about what's planned – is it safe for those taking part (e.g. bucking bronco games don't go well with intoxicated participants).
- Allergies: check in advance if anyone has an allergy to food or drink which will be at the venue.
- Disabled guests: have a think about any special provisions

which need to be made.

- Workplace policies: failure to enforce workplace policies, such as those related to harassment or conduct, can lead to serious problems.

- Provide a safe environment: choose a safe and suitable venue and ensure that there are adequate staff and security personnel on hand.

- Monitor drinking: consider limiting the amount of alcohol or providing drink tickets to prevent excessive drinking of alcohol.

- Provide non-alcoholic drinks: offer non-alcoholic drinks to ensure that employees/guests have alternatives to alcohol.

- Plan transport to and from the venue: arrange for safe transport options, such as buses, taxis or designated drivers, to ensure that employees arrive and get home safely.

- Be ready if something goes wrong: ensure that there is a first aid kit available and that someone is trained to provide basic first aid.

MANAGING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR

To prevent accidents and ensure a happy environment, it's essential to manage employee behaviour effectively. Consider the following:

- Communicate organisation policies: remind employees of your policies and expectations regarding behaviour, harassment, and conduct.

- Designate responsible staff: appoint responsible staff members to monitor the party and intervene if necessary.

- Encourage responsible behaviour: encourage employees to drink responsibly and behave in a manner that is respectful to others.

- Have a plan for incidents: develop a plan for dealing with incidents, such as harassment or accidents and ensure that

employees know what to do in case of an emergency.

LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

Employers may be held liable for accidents or injuries – after all, the party is a workplace event. To mitigate this risk, consider the following:

- Check insurance coverage: check your company's insurance policies to ensure that you have adequate cover for accidents or injuries that may occur to employees or others at the party (most events are covered as standard by insurers but the insurer may need to know if hazardous activities are planned).

- Conduct a risk assessment: to identify potential hazards and take steps to mitigate them.

- Have a plan for incidents: develop a plan for dealing with incidents, such as accidents or injuries, and ensure that employees know what to do in case of an emergency.

A fun workplace party is a great way to celebrate Christmas, to look forward to the new year and to say thank you to staff for a good year's work.

They also pose risks, but by taking steps to prevent accidents and ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all those who attend, you can minimise the risks and create a positive and memorable experience for everyone involved.

By following sensible preparations and setting out a few helpful rules and guidelines, you can ensure that your workplace Christmas party is a great success and gives staff an appropriate thank you for past good work.

The Guernsey Health & Safety Executive provides some very helpful guidance for those organising events – have a look at it: www.gov.gg/eventsafety

Prepare well, and most of all – have fun.

