

Workers' Compensation—Complaints About Lawyers

Human Resources has received numerous complaints from employees with workers' compensation injuries about lawyers who are contacting them soliciting business. Employees are asking how the lawyers obtain information about their claims and what they can do to prevent this activity. Unfortunately, under current law, Form 2s (Employers' First Report of Injury) are available to the public through the Workers' Compensation Court. Although most lawyers do not peruse these records as a means to solicit business, some do.

According to the General Counsel of the Oklahoma Bar Association, it is legal for lawyers to send solicitation letters as long as the envelope and the letter itself state that the letter is an advertisement and the letter provides the telephone number of the Oklahoma Bar Association in case one wishes to register a complaint. The Oklahoma Bar Association will take no action in response to complaints unless the lawyer does something illegal. It is illegal for lawyers to solicit business through personal contact, telephone calls, or email.

A task force appointed by Governor Henry to study Workers' Compensation in Oklahoma has recommended limiting access to Form 2s to the employer, employee, insurance

company, and attorneys for any of these parties who have a properly executed power of attorney. The Task Force Report, found at www.gov.ok.gov/docs/workers.pdf, page 7, II, contains the *Limitation on Solicitation* recommendation. You may wish to contact your local legislators and request changes in the law to keep these records confidential. There are numerous workers' compensation bills drafted by the House and Senate for consideration this legislative session.

Broadspire manages claims for OSU. OSU and Broadspire are committed to ensure that injured employees receive prompt and appropriate care as well as prompt payment for lost wages and settlements for disability ratings. OSU wants employees to receive the best medical care and pay to which they are entitled, regardless of whether or not they are represented by legal counsel.

OSU respects the right of employees to obtain legal counsel. Since employees pay their lawyers a portion of their workers' compensation settlements, employees may wish to obtain free and unbiased legal advice through the Workers' Compensation Court by calling (405) 522-8762.



News You Can Use!

Important Information for Employees of
Oklahoma State University

April 2005

Sick Leave Policy Review

All continuous regular staff employees appointed at least 50 percent time may request sick leave for family members.

Sick leave may be taken when it is necessary for an employee to be absent from work due to an illness or disabling injury or for occasions which require the employee to care for a member of the immediate family who is ill or incapacitated.

Immediate family is defined as the father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, daughter, grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter, or corresponding in-law relationships.

Sick leave is used concurrently when the employee also qualifies for Family Medical Leave.

Staff employed in a full-time position (100% FTE) accrue sick leave with full pay at the rate of 22 working days (14.67 hours per month or 6.77 hours per biweekly pay period) during each year of service.

Staff employed in a part-time position (at least .5 but less than 1.0 FTE) accrue sick leave proportionate to FTE.

Sick leave accrues during periods of leave with pay proportional to FTE, except during

terminal annual leave. Sick leave does not accrue during periods of leave without pay.

Sick leave accrues and is credited at the end of each pay period for employees in active pay status on the first Friday of the pay period if paid biweekly and the 16th day of the month if paid monthly. Accrued sick leave is available to be used by an employee during the period in which it is credited.

The maximum accrual of sick leave for full time staff is 200 working days (1600 hours). Amounts in excess of the 1600 hours that would otherwise accrue are transferred to an Extended Sick Leave Account.

Additional information about sick leave can be found in OSU Policy and Procedure 3-0716 *Sick Leave for Staff*. OSU Policies and Procedures can be found at www.okstate.edu/osu_per/policy_proced.htm.

Staff Appreciation Day Picnic

Tuesday, April 26, 2005, Willard Lawn

See the SAC website, <http://fp.okstate.edu/sac/> for more information, including details about door prizes and how to win a cedar patio swing

OSU Human Resources developed this information for the convenience of OSU employees. It is a brief interpretation of more detailed and complex materials. If further clarification is needed, the actual law, policy and contract should be consulted as the authoritative source. OSU continually monitors benefits, policy and procedures and reserves the right to change, modify, amend, or terminate benefit programs at any time.

Administrative Professionals Day Wednesday, April 27, 2005

Sometimes You're the Bug... Sometimes You're the Windshield will be presented by Pamela Jett, Wednesday, April 27, 2005.

Identify the warning signs that stress is reducing your productivity, discover real world time-management techniques, create positive responses to challenging events, and learn new ways to stay focused. Designed to help you avoid the "S.P.L.A.T." of stress in your life, this motivational seminar will be held from noon to 4pm at a cost of \$59 (includes lunch). A second abbreviated session will be held from 5pm to 7pm at a cost of \$39.

Enroll today as seating will be limited.
http://fp.okstate.edu/hrosu/training_enroll.htm. This class counts as electives for the Ambassador Program.

Medicare Reminder

If you plan to work past age 65, you should contact the local Social Security office to apply for Medicare Part A approximately three months before you turn age 65. There is no cost for Medicare Part A (hospital coverage). This coverage has been purchased through taxes that you and your employer(s) paid throughout your working career.

Once you cease working, you will want to apply for Medicare Part B (other medical coverage, such as doctors' fees). There is a cost for Medicare Part B. Failure to apply for Medicare benefits timely might jeopardize future opportunities for this coverage. The health coverage that you have through OSU will remain primary as long as you continue to work.

Extended Sick Leave Questions

You may have noticed "Extended Sick Leave" on *Web for Employees (Leave Balances under Employment.)* This represents sick leave that has accrued in excess of 1600 hours and is only available to establish additional service for OTRS credit.

To establish an initial balance for the purpose of OTRS credit, Human Resources estimated hours of sick leave that exceeded 1600 hours during the past ten years. Certain assumptions had to be made and there is certainly room for error, especially if leave corrections were made during the past ten years.

Both regular and extended sick leave are reported to OTRS at retirement. OTRS will determine if another year of retirement credit may be granted.

If you believe the extended sick leave balance is in error, please discuss this with your departmental person who handles personnel/payroll matters. If s/he concurs, s/he can call Employee Services to correct the leave balance, (405) 744-5449.

Medical Provider Updates

To maximize your benefits and reduce your out-of-pocket expenses, remember to use medical providers that are in a provider network for your plan.

For example, did you know that Wal-Mart and Walgreens pharmacies were recently added to the Community Care HMO network?

Benefits vendors, telephone numbers, and website information is available on the OSU Human Resources website at www.okstate.edu/osu_per/benefits/benefits_helplines.htm.

You Never Know Who You'll Meet on The Bus

It's not uncommon for passengers riding The Bus to strike up a conversation while en route to their destinations. Most people chat with one another on The Bus just to pass the time until they reach their stops.



However, on Friday, February 25, The Bus launched a new campaign aptly called *You Never Know Who You'll*

Meet on The Bus. Local celebrities and community leaders from the University and the City of Stillwater will ride bus routes and be available to speak with passengers on those routes. Now, bus passengers will be able to strike up a conversation with celebrity passengers while riding The Bus.

Featured celebrities who have ridden since February 25 include SGA President Joe St. John, City Commissioner Ruth Ann Kennedy, and Stillwater Mayor Bud Lacy. In the coming month, The Bus will feature several other celebrity riders:

- City Commissioner Tom Williams, April 7, from 10:20 a.m. until 11:20 a.m. on the Gray route
- OSU President David Schmidly, April 20, from 10 a.m. until 11 p.m. on the Orange route
- City Commissioner Tom Dugger, May 4, from 10:20 a.m. until 11:20 a.m. on the Blue route

The Bus is free to ride for any OSU faculty or staff member, so mark your calendars and plan to ride The Bus because ... You Never Know Who You'll Meet on The Bus.

For more information about The Bus, contact Transit Services at 744-2832 or visit www.transit.okstate.edu.

Training Opportunities

April 12	101 Ways to Wow 'Em: Presentation Skills
April 14	Greek Life
April 22	HRS, Time Input and Confirmation
April 27	Sometimes You're the Bug... Sometimes You're the Windshield
April 27	Purchasing Card Training
April 27	Sometimes You're the Bug... Sometimes You're the Windshield (Evening Special)
April 29	EA Forms and Payroll Sign-Up
May 3	How to Handle Difficult People
May 4	OSU Staff Pay Plan
May 5	New Employee Orientation
May 5	The Human Touch Performance Appraisals
May 6	Payroll Processing

For more information, or to register, refer to your 2005 Faculty and Staff Development Opportunities brochure, or go to www.okstate.edu/osu_per/hr/staff_dvpt05.htm, or call Training Services, (405) 744-5374.

TIAA-CREF Retirement Information Meetings

Systematic Withdrawal & Life Annuity, April 5, 2005, 2:00-3:00 pm, 106B Whitehurst

(For employees approaching retirement.)

One-on-One Counseling Sessions, April 5, 6, & 7, 2005, 106D Whitehurst

To make an appointment for an individual meeting, call TIAA-CREF at 1-800-842-2006 or schedule through their website at www.tiaa-cref.org.

