



Should Companies Force Employees to Travel to Zika-Infected Countries?

News

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The article, “Should Companies Force Employees to Travel to Zika-Infected Countries?” featured on *The Street*, highlighted how companies are grappling with creating policies on whether their employees must travel to Zika affected areas for business trips and if they can mandate it.

Sue Schaecher provided legal advice on how to navigate the situation.

While there is some risk when companies send their employees to these countries, they can request them to attend a business trip if it is a legitimate part of their job, said Sue.

“Employees can refuse only if there are safety reasons, if they face imminent danger and if a reasonable person would agree, which are all standards set forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA),” she said. “Employees may not have much recourse if the meetings are held inside to minimize risk.”

Despite that stricter viewpoint, Sue said managers should consider being flexible and explore options for employees to conduct their meetings and other transactions “without being physically present.”

Informing employees of precautions they can take while they are visiting those areas to prevent transmission or infection can allay many fears, she said.

“Managers can point out to employees that the virus is transmitted by mosquito bites and not from person to person by casual contact,” she said. “They can recommend that people wear long sleeves, pants and use insect repellent and mosquito netting.”

These employees are facing disciplinary action similar to other situations such as a poor performance review, a loss of pay or a bonus and even termination potentially, said Sue.

Employers need to be flexible and open to employee suggestions to help them understand the risks of Zika are not “quite as serious as they fear” since this remains a minimal issue at this point, said Sue.

To read the full article, please visit [The Street](#).

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