

## TIPS FOR THROWING COMPANY HOLIDAY PARTIES...WITHOUT BEING SUED

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The end of the calendar year and the holiday season are often ideal times for companies to thank employees for their hard work and celebrate the successes of the company. But with the let-loose attitude of holiday parties, employers often disregard the liabilities involved in throwing a company bash, especially when alcohol is being served. Employment lawyers warn human resource professionals and company leaders to be aware of potential liability they could face, especially those that could spark a lawsuit.

Lawyers commonly are called upon this time of year to help employers identify and avoid possible legal issues that could make for an unpleasant event or even lead to situations where employers could find themselves in a serious legal battle. Each year a significant number of employers report behavioral problems at their company holiday party, including hurt feelings, excessive drinking, off-color jokes, sexual advances and fist fights. These types of issues may lead to employee complaints and possible disciplinary grounds, up to and including termination. However, if a party goes awry, and the only resulting ramification ends at some type of discipline issue, then an employer can consider himself fortunate. In other instances, the employer could find himself defending a lawsuit. It's natural for employers to want to reward a year of dedicated service to the company. While that in itself doesn't pose an issue, it's how employers handle the celebration that becomes important. Before the festivities begin, employers need to be cognizant of the legal liabilities they could face if precautions are not taken.

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