

Can Guns Be Kept Out of the Workplace?

BY JOE BORDERS

MANY EMPLOYERS HAVE A FIRM POLICY OF PROHIBITING FIREARMS IN THE WORKPLACE, BUT THE APRIL 16 MURDERS OF 32 PEOPLE AT VIRGINIA TECH SPURRED CALLS FOR LEGISLATION THAT COULD MAKE THOSE POLICIES INEFFECTIVE. TEXAS GOV. RICK PERRY SAYS HE FAVORS ALLOWING LICENSED GUN OWNERS THE RIGHT TO CARRY THEIR WEAPONS ANYWHERE IN THE STATE, AND A PROPOSAL IN THE LEGISLATURE WOULD PROHIBIT EMPLOYERS FROM DISCIPLINING WORKERS WHO KEEP FIREARMS IN THEIR VEHICLES AT WORK. HERE ARE SOME WEB SITES THAT COVER THE ISSUE:

Risk Control Strategies

www.riskcontrolstrategies.com/guns_in_the_workplace.htm

Human resources departments must prepare more than ever before to avert the already clearly defined risk from workplace violence, says this site. "Just imagine carrying through with 'at risk terminations,' layoffs, closing a facility, mitigating an internal domestic violence dispute or garnishing wages with the knowledge that it is highly probable the affected employee(s) have a loaded gun in your parking lot. Clearly, the risk to the HR professional just took a quantum leap."

CSO: The Resource for Security Executives

www.csoonline.com/talkback/083105.html

This interactive column about current privacy and security issues asks whether the right to bear arms extends to company property. The column presents some recent responses — most in favor of the right to carry weapons in the workplace.

American Public Health Association

www.ajph.org/cgi/content/full/95/5/830

"Employer Policies Toward Guns and the Risk of Homicide in the Workplace" tells about a North Carolina study that evaluated the hypothesis that employers' policies allowing firearms in the workplace may increase workers' risk of homicide. "In this study, the risk of a worker being killed at work was substantially higher in workplaces where employer policy allowed workers to keep guns. Workplaces where guns were specifically permitted were 5 to 7 times more likely to be the site of a worker homicide relative to those where all weapons were prohibited. Only a small increase in the risk of homicide was associated with workplaces that allowed weapons other than guns."

HRHero.com

www.hrhero.com/headlines/041604/tip-guns.shtml

"Aim Carefully With Weapons Policy" discusses some potential pitfalls of having or not having a policy about guns in the workplace and lists some tips for implementing an effective policy. The article says an employer considering a ban must decide whether the ban applies only to employ-

ees, how to define a weapon, what the penalty is for a violation and how possession is defined.

Wiley Rein

www.wileyrein.com

In "Guns in the Workplace: Defending the Homeland," from the firm's *Privacy in Focus* newsletter, the firm says, "An employer's first line of defense for keeping guns out of the workplace is to require employees to comply with lawful policies — including a clear policy against weapons in the workplace."

The HR Employer's Blog

www.hrlawyersblog.com/2007/04/guns-in-workplace-revisited.html

San Antonio employment lawyer Chris McKinney has gathered links to proposed legislation that could allow employees to carry firearms in the workplace.

George's Employment Blawg

www.employmentblawg.com

A search on this site yields items such as "New Development on Employment Termination for Guns in Company Parking Lots," "Beyond Gun Bans: Understanding and Preventing Workplace Violence," "Controversy Over Guns at Work Continues to Rage" and "Do Workplace Gun Bans Help or Hinder Workplace Violence Prevention?"

National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action

www.nraila.org

For a pro-gun approach to the issue, search the NRA lobbying organization's Web site for "workplace."

U.S. Department of Labor

www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/

This site, maintained by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, lists several sources of information on workplace violence. Click on "Where can I learn more about workplace violence?" to see a list of references on the subject. Many of the sources address workplace violence in general, rather than the specific subject of allowing firearms at work.