

Skip the Mistletoe: Common Sense Tips For Employee Parties

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'Tis the season for holiday parties -- but employers may face HR headaches or even litigation if they don't take the proper steps to control the merriment. Greg Kilby, an attorney at Warner Norcross who focuses on employment litigation, offers a number of common sense tips for holiday parties, including:

- **Remind everyone of the policies** -- Before your event, circulate a memo reminding people of sexual harassment policies. Further remind them that these apply to events beyond the 9-5 workday.
- **Consider a dress code** -- Suggesting a dress code for the party can help keep things professional.
- **Hire professional bartenders** -- Even if you opt for an open bar, it's better to have a professional gatekeeper to do the pouring. They are trained to prevent inebriated people from further imbibing.
- **Serve food and soft drinks** -- Make sure there are plenty of things to eat, as well as alternatives to alcoholic beverages.
- **Reduce or skip the alcohol altogether** -- Not to be Scrooge, but alcohol is one of the leading culprits in party misbehavior. Hand out drink tickets or consider having a lunch or earlier holiday gathering and skip the booze entirely.
- **Offer free shuttles or tax passes** -- That way, if someone overindulges, they can be assured of a safe ride home.
- **Skip the mistletoe** -- While it may be a favorite holiday decoration, mistletoe doesn't belong in the office. Avoid anything that could contribute to an environment of harassment.