

SHAW PERSONNEL SERVICES

E-TOPIC

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CHRISTMAS PARTIES

At the risk of being considered to be a grumpy old man and a Scrooge, I am setting out a reminder of some of the pitfalls of Christmas parties.

If you organise a Company function for Christmas or, indeed, at any time, remember that it may still be considered to be a work activity. It could include all the normal responsibilities for the behaviour of employees but without the normal familiar boundaries and with the added potent ingredient of alcohol which may be the catalyst for all kinds of unwanted behaviour. I advise against including mistletoe in the Christmas decorations.

In any case, alcohol should not be served to those aged under 18. Plenty of soft drinks should be made available.

Alcohol may loosen tongues and encourage employees to discuss work topics that they might be reluctant to air at work. You should be careful, therefore, not to make any promises about the future and it is best to avoid work topics, although that is, of course, the common thread between all those attending.

Check regularly all likely areas where there might be any illicit or immoral activities. An employer may be considered responsible, for example, for any drug misuse that happens during the party.

If the party takes place with a working day following, make sure that employees are made aware that disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who is not in a fit state to work. It is therefore recommended that any parties are organised at the end of the working week.

Your duty of care as an employer may also extend to ensuring that employees who have drunk too much get home safely afterwards.

If the party is to be organised on the work premises, make sure that you disconnect or remove any work equipment that might be subject to abuse or damage, e.g. photocopiers computers and important papers.

If you allow decorations to be put up, make sure that you adhere to any health and safety procedures, for example, use a stepladder to put them up and ensure that there is no risk of fire or injury.

Now for the positive bit. I hope that your Christmas parties are a great success, enjoyed by all and contribute to the continuing success of your business.