HR COMPLIANCE LIBRARY
Ideas & Trends

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INSIDE

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Expert talks keys to building an active threat plan

As the national conversation regarding violence in the workplace suggests a heightened awareness stemming from increased media coverage, recent studies suggest there may be statistical evidence supporting this perceived frequency. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about five percent of all businesses experience an instance of workplace violence each year. For larger organizations with over 1,000 employees, this rate is increased tenfold to 50 percent. A 2014 report from the FBI found active shooter incidents in the U.S. now occur on an average of once a month. Of these incidents, almost (45.6 percent) occurred at a business while nearly a quarter (24.4 percent) occurred at Pre-K to 12 schools and institutions of higher learning.

Although active threats and the environments where they take place can vary from incident to incident, the common threads found throughout can be woven together to create the fabric of an effective and successful safety program. The following are lessons learned gleaned from past experience that businesses can use as tools for building a solid foundation for a safety-minded workplace.

1. Employers need the right mindset to clear the first hurdle. More often than not, active threat training is the elephant in the room. Everyone has seen or heard of incidents, but are reluctant to take the steps toward mitigation. The reasons may vary from believing it'll make employees more fearful than empowered to worrying the training might not be "right" for the team. However, looking the other way is not a solution to any problem, much less one with harmful consequences.

The aforementioned statistics illustrate an increasing probability of an active threat incident, making it less an *if* and more a *when*. Unfortunately, violence doesn't discriminate on where it can take place, so the entire enterprise—be it headquarters, warehouse, or storefront—should be involved in preventative measures. Breaking through the barrier of apprehension begins with a holistic approach: one team, one goal. Leadership should evaluate the type of training fitting for their organization's culture, articulate the vital importance of such training to employees, and clearly explain how the training will be implemented.

2. Response plans should be flexible. Violence is seldom a cookie cutter affair and as such a "one size fits all" response is likely an ineffective solution. Conversely, having too many threat-specific responses can be confusing, if not outright dangerous. While different threats do warrant varying responses, a series of "stovepipe" procedures can cripple a person with tunnel vision during a high stress scenario.

All active threat response plans should be built upon the same principles so even if the minute details are lost in the heat of the moment, team members can still make informed decisions to ensure the safety of themselves and others. Streamlining processes encourages a quick implementation and retention of information. Knowledge increases confidence, confidence increases decisiveness, and it is decisive action in a critical incident that saves lives.

3. Being proactive in designing and practicing response plans. A fortunate trend stemming from unfortunate roots is a movement for companies to get ahead of the curve of active threat response. For better or worse, increased exposure of violence in the workplace means it is no longer an abstract concept but rather an issue thrust into the forefront. A strategy based on hoping nothing happens and performing damage control is a folly that can irreparably destroy a brand in addition to the obvious harm inflicted upon person and property.

An effective response plan doesn't begin when the incident occurs, but as soon as training can be conducted.

An effective response plan doesn't begin when the incident occurs, but as soon as training can be conducted. Empowering employees with tools on how to identify and communicate to leadership possible high-risk indicators such as signs of growing anger, depression, or erratic behavior can be just as, if not more effective as decisive action during an active threat.

4. Communication plans must be clear. A cohesive "one-team" mindset supported by a response plan based on fundamentals and foresight cannot take place without clear communication before, during, and after a critical incident. The language plays a critical role in an active threat response program and can dictate the program's success or failure. Such language should be consistent with current policies and procedures so the program is both effective and legally defensible.

Each company will need to tailor its active threat response plan to fit its culture and workplace environment. Thankfully, a simple concept utilized by premier agencies already exists so organizations may build a clear and coherent plan: "Run, Hide, Defend."

5. Don't forget about customer service. Communication during a critical incident is by no means limited to employees, but extends to customer interaction as well. How company communicates around and with customers during an active threat incident can play a vital role in minimizing harm and mitigating supplemental harm as a result of panic.

Every active threat mitigation plan should include an emergency communication strategy which may contain one or two common components: First is the use of a code like "Code Adam" alerting employees to a specific issue while customers and vendors remain unaware of any possible issues. The second option is to use "plain English" so that everyone quickly gains situational awareness. For example, instead of using "Code Red" for an active shooter incident, the alert would announce there is an active shooter situation in progress so employees, customers, and vendors can take decisive actions to seek safety.

Cannot stress it enough: Be proactive!

Every active threat situation will unfold differently, especially since external factors such as the weather, type of environment, and other variables can present unpredictable outcomes. By being proactive over what *can* be controlled, such as implementing sound training strategies, companies can be prepared for and respond to an active threat to the best of its ability. Through the empowerment of its most valuable assets—its people—companies can mitigate risks, protect the safety of its employees, customers, and community. ■

Source: *Article taken with permission from "Getting Ahead of the Safety Curve: Keys to Building a Successful Active Threat Plan," written by Jay Hart, director of Force Training Institute.*

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EMPLOYEE SAFETY

BLS reports preliminary count of 4,679 fatal injuries in 2014

A preliminary total of 4,679 fatal work injuries were recorded in the United States in 2014, an increase of 2 percent over the revised count of 4,585 fatal work injuries in 2013, according to results from the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The preliminary rate of fatal work injury for U.S. workers in 2014 was 3.3 per 100,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers; the revised rate for 2013 was also 3.3.

Revised 2014 data from CFOI will be released in the late spring of 2016. Over the last 5 years, net increases to the preliminary count have averaged 173 cases, ranging from a low of 84 in 2011 (up 2 percent) to a high of 245 in 2012 (up 6 percent).

Key preliminary findings of the 2014 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries:

- The number of fatal work injuries in private goods-producing industries in 2014 was 9 percent higher than the revised 2013 count but slightly lower in private service-providing industries. Fatal injuries were higher in mining (up 17 percent), agriculture (up 14 percent), manufacturing (up 9 percent), and construction (up 6 percent). Fatal work injuries for government workers were lower (down 12 percent).
- Falls, slips, and trips increased 10 percent to 793 in 2014 from 724 in 2013. This was driven largely by an increase in falls to a lower level to 647 in 2014 from 595 in 2013.
- Fatal work injuries involving workers 55 years of age and over rose 9 percent to 1,621 in 2014 up from 1,490 in 2013. The preliminary 2014 count for workers 55 and over is the highest total ever reported by CFOI.
- After a sharp decline in 2013, fatal work injuries among self-employed workers increased 10 percent in 2014 from 950 in 2013 to 1,047 in 2014.
- Women incurred 13 percent more fatal work injuries in 2014 than in 2013. Even with this increase, women accounted for only 8 percent of all fatal occupational injuries in 2014.
- Fatal work injuries among Hispanic or Latino workers were lower in 2014, while fatal injuries among non-Hispanic white, black or African-American, and Asian workers were all higher.
- In 2014, 797 decedents were identified as contracted workers, 6 percent higher than the 749 fatally-injured contracted workers reported in 2013. Workers who were contracted at the time of their fatal injury accounted for 17 percent of all fatal work injury cases in 2014.
- The number of fatal work injuries among police officers and police supervisors was higher in 2014, rising from 88 in 2013 to 103 in 2014, an increase of 17 percent.

Further analysis of the findings is available on the Bureau of Labor Statistics website. ■

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT

Nursing home settles after firing transgender woman

An Alabama nursing home has agreed to settle a discrimination complaint brought by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the nonprofit legal advocacy organization said in a news release dated September 10. In what may be the first successful resolution of a transgender employment claim against a private employer in Alabama, the company has agreed to implement a new policy prohibiting such discrimination.

According to the complaint, the employee was fired on her first day at an Alabama nursing home–solely for being transgender. She was hired last year by Summerford Nursing Home Inc., a privately held nursing home company with 200 employees based in Falkville, Alabama. But after just a half day of new employee training on her first day, a senior management official called her to his office and allegedly questioned her about her sex, gender identity, and physical anatomy, according to a complaint filed with the EEOC.

"What are you?" the management official purportedly asked. When the employee replied that she was a transgender woman, he allegedly asked how she expected to work with residents when she "looked one way" and was "another way" on paper. She was told she was being terminated, effective immediately, and to leave the facility, the complaint alleged. The employee asked if she was being let go for being transgender, and the senior official reportedly confirmed that was the case.

To resolve the March EEOC complaint, the nursing home has agreed to an undisclosed financial settlement and will immediately implement a new policy prohibiting sexual orientation and gender discrimination, SPLC said. Human resource personnel and the official who terminated the employee will attend LGBT training provided by the SPLC. As part of the settlement, the EEOC claim is resolved; the business does not admit to violating any law. ■

EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT

Expert explains how to use flexible work as a tool to recruit and retain

In today's digital age, workers have access to important work files anywhere, anytime, so it's no surprise that more employees choose to work remotely when employers allow it. In fact, a recent Gallup poll found that 37 percent of U.S. workers say they have telecommuted, up slightly from 30 percent last decade. What's more, 76 percent of people surveyed by FlexJobs said that when they need to get important work done, they avoid the office.

Consequently, many forward-thinking companies looking to recruit and retain top talent are catching on to this trend. But in many cases, allowing employees to work remotely can pose several challenges for managers. From embracing collaboration and maintaining open communication to tackling time differences, employers need to rethink their workplace strategies. Maria Black, president of ADP TotalSource, offers the following suggestions for doing just that:

- **Communicate consistently.** It wouldn't be a stretch to suggest that managers should over-communicate. Even if something appears to be stated clearly, the message may need to be repeated, clarified or opened up for discussion to ensure employees completely understand the direction. In fact, setting clear expectations and communicating with staff regularly can help reinforce company goals and create an environment where employees are encouraged to ask questions. Additionally, managers should remember to lead by example and immediately address any questions or concerns. Creating goals based on metrics, discussing expected results in detail and allowing employees to develop the tactics to accomplish those initiatives can help ensure the job gets done right and that all employees feel involved and engaged throughout the process.
- **Value face-to-face communication.** While it may not be necessary on a regular basis, managers should take advantage of in-person contact with their team whenever possible. For example, when traveling to another office for a business trip, scheduling a meeting with team members in that area can help build stronger working relationships. If an in-person meeting isn't possible, the digital landscape has made face-to-face interaction easier than ever before—whether it's through a video chat or screen sharing. Managers should encourage the use of these tools and initiate discussions by prompting team members with a question or statement, such as "What's going on?" Connecting visually can add to the working relationship, building credibility and giving employees the chance to put 'a face to the name.
- **Share information quickly.** Managers should find ways to keep their teams informed in the most timely fashion possible. It's important to know when to pick up the phone, as sometimes an urgent decision needs to be made and talking it through will bring about the quickest solution. However, other times a phone call may not be the most efficient way to communicate, especially if employees are tied up with another call or not with their phone. Some businesses have an instant messaging platform for quick inter-office chats. Similarly, social media can be a great tool to enhance collaboration via platforms such as intranet sites and other online communities. Ensuring employees are comfortable with all of these tools, and understanding which tools colleagues prefer, can increase the flow of information in the most efficient manner.
- **Think globally.** A remote workforce means that not all colleagues are in the same time zone, and employers and employees alike should be considerate of where their colleagues are working. Therefore, it is important to discuss schedules. While a different time zone may be a challenge, it can be beneficial, allowing employees across the board to extend their workdays to accommodate business demand. Employers should set clear expectations with all team members with regard to scheduling, including times when they can expect to reach each other.
- **Invest time.** While a strong working relationship will help achieve company goals, it's important for employees to feel connected to each other and the company. Managers should spend some time getting to know their staff outside of the business relationship. This will increase the likelihood that employees feel more comfortable speaking with managers when issues arise and it will increase their desire to improve any issues/conflicts. Additionally, managers may want to have certain team members mentor new hires. By establishing a network in which employees feel comfortable with each other, managers can improve productivity and increase collaboration.

A remote workforce can broaden the diversity of talent for a company. Engaging and retaining those remote workers can increase a company's competitive advantage as well as create a collaborative workforce that empowers employees to be more productive. By communicating consistently, valuing face-to-face communication, sharing information quickly, thinking globally and investing the time needed to get to know employees, managers can retain top talent while allowing employees the flexibility to work outside the office. ■

Source: *Article developed exclusively for Wolters Kluwer Law & Business by Maria Black, president of ADP TotalSource.*

MINIMUM WAGE

Majority of employers support hike in minimum wage

Momentum is building behind raising the minimum wage, coming at a time when workers at all pay levels are struggling with keeping their heads above water. According to a new CareerBuilder survey, 64 percent of employers believe the minimum wage should be increased in their state, up from 62 percent last year.

While nearly 1 in 5 of all workers (19 percent) said they couldn't make ends meet every month in the last year, workers who hold or have held minimum wage jobs were much more prone to experience financial difficulties.

"Americans' wages have been stuck in a slow-growth pattern since the recession," said Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer at CareerBuilder. "As big name brands take measures to increase pay for minimum wage workers and the market overall grows more competitive for skilled labor, employers are going to start feeling more wage pressure when trying to attract and retain employees at all levels within the organization."

Fair minimum wage. Twenty-six percent of employers said they plan to hire minimum wage workers this year. Only six percent of all employers believe the federal minimum wage ($7.25 per hour) is fair. The majority (61 percent) felt a fair minimum wage is $10 or more per hour, up from 54 percent last year; and 11 percent said a fair minimum wage is $15 or more per hour, up from 7 percent last year.

The full breakdown of what employers consider to be a fair minimum wage is as follows:

- $7.25 per hour: 6 percent
- $8.00-$9.00 per hour: 24 percent
- $10.00 per hour: 27 percent
- $11.00-14.00 per hour: 23 percent
- $15.00 or more per hour: 11 percent
- No set minimum wage: 9 percent

Workers aren't making enough. Of workers who currently have a minimum wage job or have held one in the past, 65 percent said they couldn't make ends meet; 49 percent said they had to work more than one job to make ends meet. But it's not just minimum wage workers who are struggling. Nineteen percent of workers at all salary levels were not able to make ends meet during the past year. Sixty-five percent of all workers say they're in debt and while most say it's manageable, it should be noted that 16 percent of workers ages 25-34 still live with their parents, 18 percent of all workers have reduced their 401k contribution and/or personal savings in the last year and 28 percent don't set aside any savings each month.

Percentage of workers who didn't set aside money for savings in the last year:

- Ages 18-24: 32 percent
- 25-34: 26 percent
- 35-44: 31 percent
- 45-54: 29 percent
- 55+: 24 percent

Percentage of workers who don't participate in retirement plans:

- Ages 18-24: 69 percent
- 25-34: 41 percent
- 35-44: 33 percent
- 45-54: 26 percent
- 55+: 28 percent

About the survey. The national online survey, conducted on behalf of CareerBuilder by Harris Poll between May 14 and June 3, 2015, included a representative sample of 2,321 full-time hiring and human resource managers and 3,039 full-time workers in the private sector across industries and company sizes. ■

Source: *CareerBuilder.*

EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

2016 per diem rates issued for travel expense reimbursement

The IRS has provided the 2015-2016 special per diem rates for taxpayers to use to substantiate ordinary and necessary business expenses incurred while traveling away from home. The guidance provides the special transportation industry meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) rates, the rate for the incidental expenses only deduction, and the rates and list of high-cost localities for purposes of the high-low substantiation method.

Taxpayers using the rates and list of high-cost localities provided must comply with Rev. Proc. 2011-47, IRB 2011-42, 520.

The special M&IE rates for taxpayers in the transportation industry are $63 for any locality of travel in the continental United States (CONUS) and $68 for any locality of travel outside the continental United States (OCONUS).

The rate for any CONUS or OCONUS locality of travel for the incidental expenses only deduction is $5 per day.

For purposes of the high-low substantiation method, the per diem rates are $275 for travel to any high-cost locality and $185 for travel to any other locality within CONUS. The amount of the $275 high rate and $185 low rate that is treated as paid for meals is $68 for travel to any high-cost locality and $57 for travel to any other locality within CONUS. The per diem rates in lieu of the M&IE only substantiation method are $68 for travel to any high-cost locality and $57 for travel to any other locality within CONUS.

The following localities have been added to the list of high-cost localities: Mammoth Lakes, California; Grand Lake, Colorado; Silverthorne/Breckenridge, Colorado; Traverse City/Leland, Michigan; Hershey, Pennsylvania; Wallops Island, Virginia.

The following localities have changed the portion of the year in which they are high-cost localities: Napa, California; Telluride, Colorado; Miami, Florida; Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts; Nantucket, Massachusetts; Jamestown/Middletown/Newport, Rhode Island; Charleston, South Carolina; Jackson/Pinedale, Wyoming.

The following localities have been removed from the list of high-cost localities: Sedona, Arizona; Santa Cruz, California; New Orleans, Louisiana; Baltimore City, Maryland; Cambridge/St. Michaels, Maryland; Glendive/ Sidney, Montana; Conway, New Hampshire; Glens Falls, New York; Tarrytown/White Plains/New Rochelle, New York; Kill Devil, North Carolina; Williston, North Carolina.

The guidance is effective for per diem allowances for lodging, meal and incidental expenses, or for M&IE only, that are paid to any employee on or after October 1, 2015, for travel away from home on or after October 1, 2015. For purposes of computing the amount allowable as a deduction for travel away from home, the guidance is effective for M&IE or for incidental expenses only paid or incurred on or after October 1, 2015. Notice 2014-57, IRB 2014-42, 723, is superceded. ■

Source: *Notice 2015-63, I.R.B. 2015-40, October 5, 2015.*

EMPLOYEE HEALTHCARE

Worksite clinics continuing to open despite ACA uncertainties

When employers are asked how they plan to control health benefit cost over the long term, they talk about improving employee health. This focus on employee health is one factor fueling growth in worksite clinics. Last year, Mercer's National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans found that 29 percent of employers with 5,000 or more employees provided an onsite or near-site clinic offering primary care services, up from 24 percent in the prior year. Mercer followed up with these employers in a new, targeted survey on worksite clinics. Of the 134 respondents, 72 percent of those whose clinics provide general medical services said that managing employee health risk and chronic conditions is an important objective for the clinic.

For more than two-thirds of survey respondents (68 percent), improving access to care was also an important objective. As the Affordable Care Act (ACA) expands health coverage to more Americans, primary care shortages in some parts of the US could be exacerbated. Establishing a new clinic, or expanding an existing occupational health clinic to provide general medical services is one way employers can ensure that their employees—and in some cases employees' dependents—will have access to quality care.

While the ACA may have spurred employer interest in worksite clinics, an IRS notice released this February has clouded the picture by suggesting that the cost of care received through the clinic must be counted in the ACA's excise tax calculation. "Employers are definitely concerned that the operational costs of a worksite clinic could help push them over the threshold for the excise tax, although most remain convinced that the clinic will deliver positive net value," says David Keyt, Principal, National Onsite Clinic Center of Excellence Leader. "We're eager to see further regulations clarifying specifically how clinic costs will be treated."

While 15 percent of respondents believe their general medical clinic will hurt them in terms of the excise tax calculation, nearly as many (11 percent) believe it will help—presumably by helping to hold down the cost of the company's health plan—and 28 percent believe it won't have an impact either way. However, 46 percent of respondents say they don't know how the clinic will affect the calculation. Typically, the cost of the clinic accounts for 10 percent or less of their total health care spend, and for about half of the respondents, it accounts for 5 percent or less.

Measuring clinic success. The great majority of respondents (85 percent) say that their organization generally perceives the clinic as a success. Specifically, 63 percent say it has successfully reduced lost work days, and 58 percent say it has been successful in helping members control chronic conditions.

Measuring return on investment (ROI) remains a challenge for employers, and only 41 percent of respondents were able to provide ROI data. An ROI of 1.00 to 1.99 was most common (23 percent of respondents reported ROI in this range), and 13 percent reported an ROI of 2.00 or higher. Only 5 percent have an ROI of less than 1.00.

The best measure of employee satisfaction may be utilization. Respondents report that 45 percent of employees, on average, used the clinic in 2014. Nearly half of respondents (48 percent) with a general medical clinic don't require any copayment for clinic services, and 25 percent require a lower copayment than the employee would pay for comparable services under the company health plan. The majority of respondents with hourly employees (61 percent) do not require them to clock out of work for visits to the clinic.

"For many employers, employee satisfaction is a more important measure of success than ROI," said Mr. Keyt. "If employees are using the clinic, it means they haven't been taking time off work to visit a doctor, and that they're getting the medical care they need to stay healthy and productive."

Providing a broad range of services. In clinics that provide general medical services, immunizations and screenings are the most common services offered. Urgent care is provided in 73 percent of clinics, preventive care exams in 71 percent, and chronic disease management in 63 percent. Pharmacy services are offered at 38 percent of clinics, and just over a fourth (26 percent) provide mental health or employee assistance program (EAP) counseling in their clinics. Worksite clinics are a convenient way for employees to undergo biometric screenings (offered at 77 percent of clinics), participate in face-to-face chronic condition coaching (60 percent) and take part in lifestyle management programs such as smoking cessation (59 percent) or weight management (56 percent).

The patient-centered "medical home" is a delivery model through which patients—often those who are high-risk or chronically ill—can have their care coordinated by a primary care physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant. Using the worksite clinic as a medical home allows employers to offer a greater level of care to the higher-risk, medically challenging employees and dependents who typically account for the largest portion of health care spending. Three years ago, 13 percent of survey respondents with general medical clinics used their clinic as a medical home. That's doubled, to 26 percent of the respondents to this year's survey, with another 11 percent considering it. And about half the respondents (49 percent) say that members are allowed to select the clinic as their primary care provider.

Bill Ermatinger, Corporate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Huntington Ingalls Industries, the nation's largest military shipbuilder, is a major proponent of the comprehensive worksite health center his company just launched in Gautier, Mississippi. "Our vision behind the wide range of wellness services—from onsite doctors to a pharmacy, lab and physical therapy facilities—continues our complete dedication to workforce support and development," said Mr. Ermatinger. "We rely upon our highly trained workers and want to provide them and their families with the best and most convenient health care available, focusing especially on prevention. Since opening the health center on July 1, we have seen a steady increase in patients, and have doubled our patient visits in just over four weeks. More importantly, almost 25 percent of the appointments have been wellness education appointments with our resident nurse educator and dietician. Next, we plan to open a comparable health center for our corporate and shipyard employees at Newport News Shipbuilding located in Newport News, Virginia, in January 2016." ■

Source: *Mercer.*

HR QUIZ

Can health insurance be provided to foster children on a pre-tax basis?

Q **Issue:** *Your company has a health insurance plan that covers employees' foster children. Can you provide health plan coverage for foster children on a pre-tax basis without having to impute income to the employee?*

A **Answer:** Generally, yes — at least for federal tax law purposes.

The favorable federal tax treatment afforded to employer-provided health insurance benefits under Internal Revenue Code Secs. 105 and 106 applies to employees and their spouses and eligible dependents, including children under the age of 27. Under Internal Revenue Code Sec. 152(f)(1), the definition of "child" for this purpose includes a foster child that is placed with the employee "by an authorized placement agency or by judgment, decree, or other order of any court of competent jurisdiction."

State tax law may yield a different result for state law purposes, so employers should consult with their tax advisers for guidance.

HR NOTEBOOK

CPI for all items declines 0.1% in August

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) decreased 0.1 percent in August on a seasonally adjusted basis, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported September 16. Over the last 12 months, the all items index rose 0.2 percent before seasonal adjustment. The gasoline index declined sharply in August and was the main cause of the seasonally adjusted all items decrease. The food index rose 0.2 percent in August, with the indexes for eggs and for fruits and vegetables rising notably.

The index for all items less food and energy increased 0.1 percent in August, the same increase as in July. The index for shelter rose, as did the indexes for apparel, tobacco, and alcoholic beverages. However the index for airline fares declined sharply, and the indexes for household furnishings and operations, recreation, and used cars and trucks also decreased in August, with the indexes for new vehicles and medical care unchanged.

Real average hourly earnings increase 0.5 percent in August

Real average hourly earnings for all employees increased 0.5 percent from July to August, seasonally adjusted, the BLS reported September 16. This result stems from a 0.3 percent increase in average hourly earnings combined with a 0.1 percent decrease in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

Real average weekly earnings increased 0.7 percent over the month due to the increase in real average hourly earnings combined with an increase of 0.3 percent in the average workweek.

Real average hourly earnings increased 2.0 percent, seasonally adjusted, from August 2014 to August 2015. This increase in real average hourly earnings combined with a 0.3 percent increase in the average workweek resulted in a 2.3 percent increase in real average weekly earnings over this period.

Unemployment rate edges down to 5.1% in August

Total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 173,000 in August, the number of unemployed persons edged down to 8.0 million, and the unemployment rate edged down to 5.1 percent, the BLS reported September 4. Over the year, the unemployment rate and the number of unemployed persons were down by 1.0 percentage point and 1.5 million, respectively. Job gains occurred in health care and social assistance (+56,000), professional and business services (+33,000), food services and drinking places (+26,000), and financial activities (+19,000). Manufacturing (-17,000) and mining (-9,000) lost jobs. Employment in other major industries, including construction, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and government, showed little change over the month.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Working Mother announces 30th annual best companies list

Marking its 30th year evaluating U.S. companies for family-friendly benefits, *Working Mother* magazine has named the “Working Mother 100 Best Companies” of 2015 to honor employers who set the standard for work life practices nationwide. Only two companies — IBM and Johnson & Johnson — are heralded for making the list all 30 years. The top 10 companies for 2015 are Abbott, Deloitte, Ernst & Young LLP, General Mills, IBM, KPMG, McKinsey, PwC, WellStar Health System, and Zoetis.

Then and now: Summary of 100 Best Companies over 30 years. *Working Mother* drew a few comparisons between the workplace for working mothers in 1986 versus now:

- In 1986, two Best Companies are led by female CEOs; however no Fortune 100 company has a female CEO. Today, 11 Best Companies are led by female CEOs and nine lead a company in the Fortune 100.
- In the late 80s, only 5 of 30 best Companies offer fully paid maternity leave, ranging from 1 to 8 weeks. None reports offering paid leave for new dads or adoptive parents. Today, all 100 Best Companies offer fully paid maternity leave to full-time employees, while a majority offer paid paternity and paid adoption leave.
- In 1986, seven of the 30 Best Companies offer flextime, the ability to shift hours slightly; only two allow employees to work from home. Now, all 100 Best Companies offer flextime and telecommuting, while a majority offer job sharing and compressed workweeks. ■