

TOP FIVE TIPS for hosting a safe holiday event

Hosting events in the workplace is a great way to celebrate an achievement, build a spirit of teamwork, and reduce stress. But workplace events can also be your biggest source of liability, if not handled responsibly. Courts have found that the standard of care imposed on an employer is higher than the

standard of care imposed on commercial hosts, such as bars and restaurants.

Whether you are planning a holiday party for staff or rewarding customers for their business, consider these tips.

1. SET THE GROUND RULES

Have a written policy regarding alcohol use at all company events and activities, and provide a copy to each employee. Make sure that invitations state that the employer does not condone over-consumption or operating a vehicle while impaired. Provide a fixed location and time for any event. Do not endorse or offer to reimburse expenses for an after-party.

2. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Commercial establishments have all of the licences and permits required to carry out their business and host your event. If you are planning to host in an alternate location, including your workplace, you must get a Special Occasion Permit. Regardless of how you perceive your event (private, closed, etc.) or what you charge for drinks, you still need a permit. A permit is unnecessary only if the event is in your home. However, as host, you still have a responsibility to provide duty of care to prevent guests from harming themselves or others. Information about applying for a Special Occasion Permit is available at slga.com.

3. PROVIDE SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES TO DRINKING

Offer a variety of tasty non-alcoholic beverages. By providing your guests with a selection of great alternatives, you help them make wiser choices. Have food and snacks on hand, the more substantial the better. When people are kept busy and fed, they tend to drink less.

4. MONITOR GUESTS' CONSUMPTION

Devise a strategy for determining if people are becoming intoxicated. Appoint a responsible individual to monitor alcohol consumption. Limit the number of drinks each guest is served, rather than hosting an open bar. Set a specific time to stop serving alcohol before the event ends. Be alert for guests who have consumed alcohol outside of your event.

5. PLAN A SAFE RIDE HOME

Start with a policy of zero tolerance for drinking and driving. Know, in advance, the numbers for taxis or services in your community that offer designated drivers or chartered transportation. Provide a safe ride home for guests who have been drinking. If transportation cannot be arranged, provide a hotel room or other accommodation. Your duty of care does not end when your event ends or when your guests leave. You must ensure that your guest is safely in a taxi or hotel room, or left in the care of a responsible, sober adult.

Serve It Right Saskatchewan (SIRS) is the province's official responsible service of alcohol program. The Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council administers the online training. For information, contact Lendee Wiebe at 306-933-5910, lendee.wiebe@tourismsask.com.