

Protect yourself and your business investment by complying with federal and state laws and providing your employees a road map of your expectations. Establish a relationship with the Dept. of Labor - it can save you time, money and grief. Contact your local office and ask to speak to an Employer Representative. Let them walk you through the enrollment process for your unemployment insurance number and obtaining required federal and state posters. The posters are a good jumping off point for a simple handbook but make sure to include other essentials like hours of operation, defined payroll periods and pay day, any benefits you may offer, a code of ethics (address things such as your expectations regarding dress code, absenteeism and tardiness, insubordination, harassment, housekeeping issues, performance, and safety to pinpoint a few examples). Remember that a handbook should be a living document and change to meet the needs of you and your company. But you have to start somewhere - keep it simple and make sure to exclude any rule or policy that you are not willing to enforce. If you separate an employee for cause, just about every unemployment claim document asks when and how was the employee made aware of the rule or policy? Have every employee sign an acknowledgement of receipt of their handbook and keep it in their employee file.

Now, why DID the chicken cross the road?

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