

RECESSION RAISES UNEMPLOYMENT TAX RATES

As signs point to an economic rebound in 2010, some Washington employers will face recession fallout next year in the form of higher unemployment-insurance tax rates.

The Employment Security Department has begun mailing 2010 tax-rate notices to more than 170,000 businesses. The average tax rate in 2010 will be an estimated 2.38 percent, up from 1.55 percent in 2009 – but still lower than rates during the last economic recovery in 2004 (2.81 percent) and 2005 (2.78 percent), and equal to the 2006 average rate.

The 2010 tax rates will range from 0.95 percent to 6 percent, compared to 0.35 percent and 6 percent in 2009. Taxes will apply to the first \$36,800 of earnings for each worker.

The tax rates are recalculated each year using a formula established in state law. The Employment Security Department does not have discretion to set or adjust tax rates.

Because the state had historically low unemployment from 2005 through 2008, the 2009 tax rates were the lowest in 40 years. But high unemployment coupled with record benefit payouts in 2009 will drive up employers' tax rates in 2010. Even employers that have had no layoffs in the past four years will see higher tax rates because the benefit payouts far exceeded taxes collected.

Unemployment taxes are deposited into a trust fund from which benefits are paid. As of Nov. 30, there was \$2.79 billion in the fund, enough to provide about 14 months of benefits in a severe recession.

The recession has demonstrated that Washington's unemployment insurance system is one of the most stable in the country, said Employment Security Commissioner Karen Lee.

Employers paying taxes in January 2010 are filing for the last three months of 2009, so they should continue to use their 2009 tax rates. The new tax rates will be used to calculate taxes that are due April 30 for the first quarter of 2010.

Farm Bureau offers an Unemployment Insurance Management Program that provides a comprehensive service to manage your unemployment insurance claims. For more information and a free quote, please see <http://www.wsfb.com/UIClaimsMgmtProgram>.

ESSENTIAL TRAINING: TWO DAY SUPERVISOR TRAINING (SPANISH)

January 26 & 27 Mt. Vernon OR
Jan. 28 & 29 in Pasco
(8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) - The breakfast meeting for owners will be held the second morning of the training from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Your orchard, dairy or farm supervisors will have the opportunity to attend a two-day seminar on supervisory skills in Spanish, with a breakfast presentation to owners in English to summarize the training that workers are receiving.

Registration is limited to 50 workers at each location so register today to secure a seat for your supervisors. The cost is \$150 per person and includes lunch both days, owners breakfast, and a textbook (Spanish or English).

For details and to register go to our website at www.wsfb.com.

Contact Kim Bresler at kbresler@wsfb.com or (360) 528-2916 with additional questions.

Editor

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SAFETY TALK SUBJECT: WHY ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

I would like you to ask your workers, "Why do accidents occur?" Some people chalk accidents up to bad luck, but its not that simple. Every accident is caused by a breakdown in one of four areas: the worker/operator, the tools, the materials, or the method used. The most common accidents are usually a combination of worker or operator error, along with one of the other three areas. Most often, accidents result from an unsafe act or an unsafe condition. Today we will review some types of unsafe acts, the cause of these acts, and unsafe conditions.

Avoid Unsafe Acts: Review workplace safety rules

Operating a tool or some equipment without authority.
Working at an unsafe speed – short cuts.
Using unsafe or defective equipment or using equipment in an unsafe manner.
Disconnecting safety devices.
Unsafe unloading, placing or mixing materials.
Assuming an unsafe position or posture.
Working on moving equipment.
Horseplay or distractions; taking shortcuts.
Failure to wear and use personal protective equipment.

What Causes Unsafe Acts?

An improper attitude.
Lack of knowledge or skills.
Reduced mental or physical capacities.
Review your Workplace safety protocols.

Unsafe Conditions: review how to control hazards Improper guarding

Defective equipment or materials.
Unsafe working procedures.
Improper housekeeping.
Poor lighting or ventilation.
Improper personal attire (Poor dress).
No or improper evaluation of site conditions.

The bottom line is still the use by each worker of their common sense by avoiding contact with unsafe conditions and by avoiding unsafe acts.

MANDATORY RETRO SAFETY WORKSHOPS - JANUARY DATES

As a WA Farm Bureau Retro/Safety member you are required to attend at least one safety workshop per year. You can attend more than one workshop, and multiple attendees from one company can to attend a workshop.

January 7 - Kennewick (Tri-Tech Skills Center) 5929 W. Metaline Drive off Kellogg

January 8 - Walla Walla (Fire District 4 Training Room) 2251 S. Howard Street

January 21 - Moses Lake (Grant County Fair Grounds, Huck-Fuller Bldg.) 3953 Airway Dr. NE

January 22 - Ellensburg (Days Inn) 901 Berry Road

No charge. Simply show up. Registration not required. For an agenda and more dates, please go to:

<http://www.wsfb.com/employers/retro/winter-safety-workshops>.