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STATEWIDE MASK MANDATE NOW IN FORCE

Governor Edwards has reinstated a statewide mask requirement due to the spread of the coronavirus. All Louisiana residents must wear a mask or face covering when in public, including when they are at a business unless they are consuming food or drinks, or if maintaining strict social distancing of at least six feet apart. The mask requirement applies to employees and customers.

Businesses not enforcing the mask mandate can be issued a citation, but businesses may rely on representations from customers and employees if they have qualified for an exemption from the mask requirement. A business that refuses to let a customer or employee enter the business because they are not wearing a mask can ask law enforcement for assistance if the unmasked customer or employee refuses to leave.

The statewide mask requirement will be in effect until at least September 1st, and may be extended after that depending on circumstances at that time.

LSBA members can download a free poster to notify customers and employees that masks or face coverings are required to be worn at their business by visiting www.louisianasba.org/Members_Posters-and-Updates.cfm.

NEW DIRECT PPP LOAN FORGIVENESS PORTAL

The US Small Business Administration has opened an online portal for small businesses to apply for PPP loan forgiveness. Until now, the only way to apply for PPP forgiveness was through the bank that administered the loan. This new portal allows you to bypass your bank and go directly to the Small Business Administration for PPP forgiveness.

You must meet 2 important criteria to use the SBA's direct forgiveness portal:

- Your PPP loan must have been \$150,000 or less, AND
- The bank where you got your PPP loan must be signed up with the SBA for direct forgiveness.

If your PPP loan was for \$150,000 or less and you are interested in applying directly with the SBA for forgiveness instead of through your bank, the first step is to see if your lender is participating in direct forgiveness. You can view the SBA's list of lenders by visiting www.sba.gov/document/support-ppp-lenders-participating-direct-forgiveness.

If your bank is not on the SBA's list, or if your PPP loan was for more than \$150,000, you cannot use the SBA's new portal and will have to apply through your bank for loan forgiveness.

To apply for forgiveness on the SBA's portal, you will need the following information:

- Your company's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)
- Your PPP loan number and amount of your loan
- The number of employees you had when you got your PPP loan and how many you have today
- The amount of your PPP loan spent on payroll
- The amount of forgiveness you are requesting (which is the same as the amount of your PPP loan if spent on payroll and the other approved expenses such as rent and utilities)

To access SBA's direct forgiveness portal step-by-step guide, visit sba-forgiveness-docs.s3-us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/SBA-PPP-DF-User-Guide.pdf.

If you have any question about PPP forgiveness, you can ask our experts by replying to this email or calling 844-242-5722.

SBA'S ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOAN PROGRAM WEBINAR

The Small Business Administration (SBA) will be hosting a free webinar on September 9th from 2-4 EDT for small businesses interested in applying for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL).

The EIDL program provides economic relief to businesses that have been financially impacted by the coronavirus. The webinar will detail application eligibility and steps to apply for the loan. The deadline to apply for an EIDL is December 31st, 2021.

To register for this SBA webinar, please visit www.sba.gov/events/1696390.

BAD WEATHER WAGE POLICIES

Hurricane season is here, and employers should review their bad weather policies to ensure they properly compensate all employees who may miss work because of bad weather conditions. Because Louisiana does not have its own wage and hour laws, the federal government's Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) governs employee compensation and determines if certain employees must be paid for time missed at work due to inclement weather.

Hourly workers not exempt from overtime provisions of the FLSA do not have to be compensated for time they did not work during bad weather conditions, unless your company has a written policy stating differently.

Despite this law, some employers choose to pay non-exempt employees (typically hourly workers) for time they are unable to work as a result of bad weather. If an employer chooses to do this, then any bad weather policy should be applied the same way each time. Employers with policies should clearly communicate the policy and expectations to all employees well before bad weather occurs.

GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES PROVIDING COVID RELIEF

Beginning August 16th, eligible small businesses can apply for grants to support coronavirus response and relief efforts in Louisiana through the Nonprofit and Small Business Assistance Program. Required use of grant funds must provide workforce development activities focused solely on the negative economic impact of the coronavirus.

For more information on eligibility and to apply, visit esweb.revenue.louisiana.gov/SmallBusinessAssistance/Eligibility.