

For further
information contact:

Judith Ellery
jellery@metcalfes.co.uk
0117 9453080

Paul Seath
pseath@metcalfes.co.uk
0117 9453084

CHRISTMAS PARTY ADVICE

The festive season is here and most companies are holding parties. We don't want to put a damper on things but do remember that bad behaviour by staff can amount to harassment. Most common are sexual or racial. Be aware you can be held responsible for the behaviour of staff, even if it's off the premises and at a party.

To minimise your exposure take reasonable steps to put the correct controls in place and everything possible has been done to reduce the risks. Additionally you will be expected to demonstrate that proper consideration has been given to the organisation of the party. Practical steps include:

- Reminding staff of the content of the Company's harassment and equal opportunities policy
- Informing staff of the type of conduct that will constitute sexual or racial harassment
- Warning staff that inappropriate behaviour will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and may lead to dismissal
- Ensuring that the content of any professional entertainment (eg comedian) is appropriate and will not in itself constitute sexual or racial harassment
- Try to moderate the consumption of alcohol by staff. Obviously this is not always going to be easy but if alcohol is going to be consumed employers also ought to consider preventing people driving

Also take a look at ACAS's "Happy Christmas Party" Advice, which sets out frequently asked questions, such as:

- How to make sure people don't get too drunk and fail to turn up the next day
- What if an employee suffers verbal abuse about being gay at a local pub before the party?
- What do you do with all those photocopies of bare flesh?

As always the advice is clear and well written (although much of it is common sense). It can be found at:

www.acas.co.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1000