



HR Broadcast –

Should you have a full employee contact list?

I was recently asked by an employer whether he could keep a full list of employee contact details; he had no wish to breach the Data Protection Act.

At some time an unforeseen event may happen and you may need to get hold of some or even all of your staff outside of their normal working hours. In an emergency you need to be sure that you have access to a full list of contact details for each employee so that they can be reached in the event of an emergency.

While we hope such situations never happen, you may suffer a fire, flood or total power failure at your business premises. You may even have a disaster recovery plan to deal with such an event. There can also be more mundane reasons, for example, an employee may telephone in sick and their work then needs to be covered, and you need to make brief but urgent contact with that employee.

If this emergency situation occurs outside of your working hours, as an employer you may well need to get hold of employees to advise them of the situation and let them know what they need to do. This could be to work from home until further notice, report to different business premises, assemble at a designated meeting point, etc. In other unexpected situations, such as where an employee has called in sick, you might only need to contact one or two employees to ask if they would be willing to provide cover at short notice. Therefore, in order for the business to avoid a difficult situation getting much worse it is important to have a full contact list of

employees. This may well save you time and a great deal of frustration.

An employee contact list should include, for every employee at least the following;

- (1) Full name;
- (2) Personal mobile number;
- (3) Landline telephone number;
- (4) Personal e-mail address(es); and
- (5) Next of kin details.

In addition, ensure that your employees notify you of any changes to their personal information immediately. Further, confirm every six months or so that the information they have previously provided is still current. A brief e-mail asking if they have changed any of their contact details in the last six months will suffice.

However, going back to the original query, do not, under any circumstances, circulate your full employee contact list to all staff – it is your employees' personal data and their colleagues have no general right to see it. This list should only be available to those who might need it, e.g. directors, human resources, managers and perhaps supervisors.

As part of your disaster recovery plan it is a good idea to decide who will do what in the event of an emergency if everyone has to be contacted. If you have a number for employees, one person shouldn't be left to make all the notification calls. You may wish to consider some form of cascading notification plan.