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Washington Employers Should Review Firearms Policy

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Following recent public shootings, gun regulation has become one of the nation's most pressing political and societal issues. While most attention has focused on hot-button topics like magazine-capacity restrictions, universal background checks, and bans on assault weapons, Washington employers should also take the opportunity to review their weapons and firearms policies.

Like many states, Washington permits citizens to carry firearms in public - either concealed or open. The right to carry a firearm, however, is subject to limitations. For instance, a person cannot carry in certain government buildings, and owners of private land may generally prohibit the carrying of firearms or other weapons on their property.

Against this backdrop, employers find themselves in a delicate position. Some workers may have legitimate justifications for carrying a weapon. Employees may work late hours, live in remote areas, or transport valuables. At the same time, employees expect a safe work environment, and employers face risks and potential liability from permitting firearms on employer property.

Fortunately Washington law allows employers considerable discretion. Both private and public employers may generally prohibit employees from carrying firearms or other weapons on the job. They may also prohibit the possession of firearms on employer-owned property, including employer-owned parking garages and lots.

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