

Traffic tardiness: Be consistent with punishments

Q. How many times should we allow an employee to be late before giving an oral warning? We have a mandatory 8:30 a.m. production meeting. Everyone knows traffic is out of control, but most employees manage to arrive on time most of the time. Some are consistently late and constantly blame traffic. — J. A., California

A. You don't have to accept "I was stuck in traffic" as an explanation, especially if an employee offers this excuse more than once. Your best bet is to implement an attendance and tardiness policy that includes a clear progressive-discipline policy.

As with all employment policies, the key to avoiding discrimination claims is to be consistent and evenhanded with your enforcement. Don't come down hard on one employee's traffic tardiness while going easy on another.