

How to deal with the office snitch

Employees who snitch on their co-workers can be a real headache for supervisors. ("That's Joe's eighth cigarette break today.") The information is not usually helpful and often threatens morale in the workplace. The snitch seeks to alienate you from other employees and hopes to strengthen her own relationship with you.

Here's what to do:

- **Explain clearly that the snitching must stop.** Give the person an example or two of the kind of behavior you're talking about, so that she understands what you mean. Don't be surprised if she acts surprised. That doesn't mean she doesn't understand; she's just discovering that she misjudged you.
- **Tell the employee you have no interest in pettiness.** Remind the employee that you have more important work to do and so does she.
- **Point out the potential damage risk to morale and efficiency.** Other workers will catch on to the snitch's tactics; and no unit can work well when members distrust one another. Your job is to promote harmony in the workplace, and a culture of snitching will undermine it.

Important: Don't confuse petty snitching with legitimate whistle-blowing. Whistle-blowers are protected by federal law. They are valuable, dedicated employees who discover problems in work quality, safety or legal compliance and report problems to someone who can right the wrong. Learn to recognize the difference.