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Unemployment Taxes Rising

State unemployment taxes in Illinois are rising. As noted by Personnel Planners, Inc., an unemployment cost control company, what was once an insignificant tax is now becoming a critical issue for business profitability. In 2005, Illinois will begin taxing the first \$10,500 of earnings. Tax rates are rising also. Where the minimum and maximum unemployment tax rate in Illinois was .6 percent and 7.2 percent in 2003, the minimum and maximum rates will be 1.2 percent and 9.8 percent in 2005.

In addition to this exposure to higher taxes, weekly unemployment benefits have been rising, making any one claim more expensive. The cost of claims is the principal basis for a company's tax rate. When claimants receive more compen-

sation for longer periods of time, a company's experience rating will rise—and so will its unemployment taxes.

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The Illinois legislature has also increased employers' exposure to unemployment claims by amending the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act to make locked out workers eligible for benefits. Until this new law—which was passed on the last day of the legislative session—unionized workers were generally not eligible for unemployment benefits when their employers locked them out during a labor dispute. But the unions have pushed hard for this change—and they have now won.

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OSHA Summaries Must Be Posted

From February 1 until April 30, 2005, employers must post a summary of their employees' job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred during 2004. Employers with more than ten workers are required to post the OSHA form 300A in a conspicuous place where notices to employees are customarily posted. Employers must also make a copy of the summary available to workers who move from work site to work site, such as construction workers. Certain industries are exempt from the posting requirement, particu-

larly in the retail, services, finance, and real estate sectors. A complete list of the exempt industries is posted on OSHA's Web site, www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/RKforms.html.

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