

Screening your employees

Latest statistics released by Employers Mutual Protection Service (EMPS) for July 2005, show that 3.98% of applicants screened had a criminal record, 21.57% had a financial record, 4.34% of qualifications were bogus and 23.8% of drivers licenses checked did not exist.

EMPS director Kirsten Halcrow says: "One area where employers can be blindsided is working with temporary or staffing agencies. Most employers would not intentionally bring people onto their premises with criminal records that make them unsuitable for a particular job, yet employers consistently hire temporary workers and independent contractors from staffing agencies with no idea who these people are.

"Employers hire temporary workers from agencies often without any assurance as to their background or qualifications. Given the sensitive information found on businesses computer systems, even one bad temp could do substantial damage."

Halcrow says that staffing firms may advertise in their marketing materials that they carefully screen all applicants, without stating the extent of the screening: "Unless they specifically tell the employer a criminal check is being done, an employer should not simply assume that a criminal check is being conducted. Because casual labour is moved from company to company and a criminal check was done two years ago does not mean that their criminal status is the same. Employers should be insisting that agencies do check prior to each new assignment."

She advises employers to carefully document what a staffing company is doing because employers have co-employment relationship with temporary workers: "Even though workers may be on the payroll of a staffing agency, since the workers perform duties at the employer's place of business, the employer can be liable for harm that the workers cause.

"Labour companies are also being more proactive in screening candidates before sending them to client locations. Some staffing companies have learned the hard way that failure to spend a few Rands to conduct due diligence can result in millions of Rands spent, should a dangerous criminal or imposter be sent to work for a client."

Every potential employee sent by a labour broker, recruitment agency or temp provider, into a client's workplace has the potential to put the staffing vendor out of business.

EMPS has launched an on-line screening portal. For more information go to:

www.emps.co.za/empsreferencecheck/