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# Changes in Employment and Labor Policies (2Q 2024)

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July 2024

**<Overview of changes in employment and labor policies and systems in 2024>**

- I. Implementation of the work-life balance incentive program (reduction of actual work hours)
- II. Publication and distribution of occupational safety and health guideline for small business places by type of business
- III. Establishment and implementation of measures to protect workers against extreme hot weather

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dispatched to KOTRA's Foreign Investor Support Center

## **I. Implementation of the work-life balance incentive program**

The work-life balance incentive program (reduction of actual work hours) is implemented for the first time this year. Under the program, if a business owner reduces the actual average weekly work hours\* per employee by two hours or more in order to improve excessively long working hours, the business owner shall receive KRW 300,000 per month for each employee under the program for up to one year. For example, if 100 employees are under the program in a place of business, the business owner can receive up to KRW 108 million\*\* for one year.

\* Referring to all work hours at the actual place of business including extended work hours

\*\* 30 persons (30% of the eligible employees) x KRW 300,000 per month x 12 months

Previously, for a business owner to receive work-life balance incentives, the individual employee had to apply for shortening work hours and change the labor contract, etc. However, starting this year, work-life balance incentives (reduction of actual work hours) shall be also given when the business owner has reduced the actual work hours across the place of business by encouraging the use of flexitime, reducing unnecessary nighttime work, and allowing workers to freely use their paid leave days.

### **<Summary of the work-life balance incentive program (reduction of actual work hours)>**

**(About)** Incentives are provided to business owners who established a plan to reduce work hours and reduced the actual work hours across the business, in order to improve the culture of long working hours.

**(Eligibility)** Owners of SMEs and middle-standing businesses who have established a detailed plan to reduce actual work hours and reduced the actual work hours across the entire place of business

**(Requirements)** a. Establishment of a plan to reduce actual work hours, b. The average actual work hours per employee during the work hour reduction period should be reduced by two hours or longer compared to the three-month period before the work hour reduction period, c. Work hour management should be done through electronic or mechanical means

$$\diamond (\text{Calculation of actual work hours reduced}) = (\text{Average actual work hours per employee over three months before reduction of actual work hours}) - (\text{Average actual work hours per employee for three months periods after reduction of actual work hours})$$

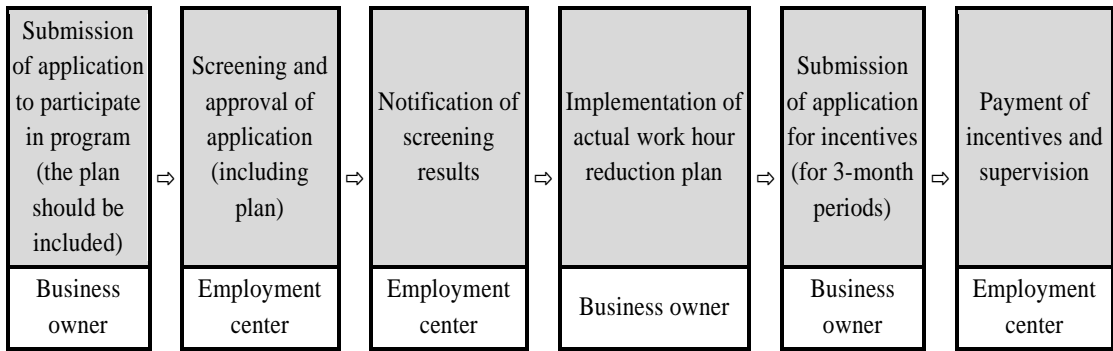
**(Number of employees supported by the program)** 30% of the eligible employees, up to 100 employees

\* If there are less than 10 eligible employees, three will be supported.

**(Amount of incentives)** Incentives of KRW 300,000 per month shall be provided per employee under the program (fixed amount)

**(Program period)** One year from the date on which the actual work hour reduction plan was implemented

**(Application method)** Publicly open application



**(How to apply)** Visit the business support department of the employment center having jurisdiction over your place of business or apply on-line through Work24 ([www.work24.go.kr](http://www.work24.go.kr)).

Classification	Reduction of set work hours	Reduction of actual work hours
Requirements	Reduction of individual weekly work hours (35 hrs or longer → 15~30 hrs)	Reduction of average weekly actual work hours per employee by 2 hrs or longer
Eligible applicants	Middle-standing companies and companies subject to prioritized	Middle-standing companies and companies subject to prioritized

	support	support
Supported period	1 year	1 year
Amount of incentives	① Incentives for work hours reduction (KRW 300,000 per month) ② Subsidy for reduced wages (KRW 200,000 per month)	Incentives for reduction (KRW 300,000 per month)

## II. Publication and distribution of occupational safety and health guideline for small business places by type of business

A more simplified occupational safety and health guidelines that are more understandable for small business owners and easier to apply to the workplace have been published. Small businesses will be able to use the guidelines according to their type of business to prevent serious accidents.

The Ministry of Employment and Labor published occupational safety and health guidelines for 23 types of businesses in order to minimize the concerns and confusion in the field as application of the Serious Accidents Punishment Act is expanded to places of business with less than 50 employees (Jan. 2024) and help small businesses in various fields secure safety and health in their workplace.

Since 2021, the government has published and distributed 20 types of guidelines for occupational safety and health management and voluntary inspection sheets, but business insiders have complained that the publications are too thick and its contents are vague.

To address such complaints, the government published a new set of guidelines in which frequent accidents that happen in various types of businesses are featured using pictures explaining the hazards and risk factors and prevention measures for each type of business. Also, the major rules to be complied with to ensure occupational safety and health were made into the form of a checklist, which will

make it easier for businesses to understand and implement preventative measures for safety and health.

To make the guidelines more effective and more suitable for application, the most frequently occurring accidents and risk and hazard factors have been identified through meetings with 25 groups and organizations representing various different industries.

So far, the Ministry of Employment and Labor published and distributed 23 occupational safety and health guidelines by industry in several phases from April 22 through May 20 to mitigate the concerns and confusion among businesses following the extension of the Serious Accidents Punishment Act to places of business with less than 50 employees (Jan. 2024) and to help small business establish their occupational safety and health management system.

### **III. Establishment and implementation of measures to protect workers against extreme hot weather**

The Ministry of Employment and Labor announced that it will establish and implement measures to protect workers against extreme hot weather until September when the summer heat completely subsides, in order to prevent heat-related illnesses of workers working in high temperature environments.

The measures focus on the collaboration among central governments, local governments, occupational safety and health related organizations, and other related committees and organizations in order to make concerted efforts to more systematically ensure the safety of businesses and occupations that are affected by extreme hot weather.

For example, the Ministry of Employment and Labor will publish a guide to preventing heat-related illnesses explaining the three basic elements for preventing heat-related illnesses (outdoors: water, shade, rest; indoors: water, wind, rest) and measures to be taken according to the level of extreme hot weather and distribute the guide to government agencies and places of business nationwide. The Ministry will also collaborate with the Korea Meteorological Administration and provide daily forecasts on the effects of high temperatures to business owners and workers.

Business places should take the necessary measures if the perceived temperature surpasses 31°C, and they will be advised to provide rest time of at least 10 minutes every hour and reduce or suspend outdoor work from 2 PM to 5 PM.

**【 Measures recommended by heat levels 】**

Attention (31°C)	Caution (33°C)	Alert (35°C)	Serious (38°C)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Provide water, shade and rest</li> <li>· Check air conditioning and air circulation equipment</li> <li>· Provide heat information to workers</li> </ul>	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Provide 10 minutes' rest per hour</li> <li>· Shorten outdoor work during high-heat hours (2 PM to 5 PM)</li> </ul>	⇒
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Provide 15 minutes' rest per hour</li> <li>· Suspend outdoor work during high-heat hours (2 PM to 5 PM) unless unavoidable</li> <li>· Check health of workers</li> </ul>	⇒
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Provide 15 minutes' rest per hour</li> <li>· Suspend outdoor work during high-heat hours (2 PM-5PM) unless in urgent situations</li> <li>· Check health of workers</li> </ul>

Businesses that are vulnerable to high temperatures such as construction, logistics, distribution and shipbuilding and businesses employing many workers working outdoors such as delivery workers, city gas and electricity meter inspectors shall be designated as businesses at high risk of heat-related illnesses and monitored.

The Korea Occupational Health & Safety Agency shall provide technical support for the cooling and air circulating equipment in logistics and distribution businesses (300 places) to improve their working environment.

Organizations devoted to occupational safety, construction safety, occupational health and employee health centers shall visit small manufacturers with less than 50 workers and construction sites (100,000 sites) and check whether heat-related illness prevention measures are carried out and monitor the health of workers at high risk with conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

Regional labor offices will also conduct monitoring and surveillance, and shall actively advise business owners to suspend work if there is a risk of urgent health issues caused by high temperature.

In particular, attention shall be given to agriculture and livestock businesses that employ many foreigners (E9 visa holders), and elderly workers who are

vulnerable to high temperature shall be designated as ‘workers vulnerable to heat-related illnesses’ and their health will be checked on a regular basis.

In order to prevent injuries caused by heat-related illnesses in the workplace, the government will provide support so that labor and management can voluntarily establish measures to prevent heat-related illnesses in the industrial workplaces, and also take all necessary measures to protect the health of workers during high-temperature periods.



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