

1. What is sick leave?

Sick leave is paid time an employee can take off work in order to seek medical treatment or a diagnosis for themselves or their family members. This can be for emergency or routine medical treatment.

2. What is safe leave?

Safe leave is paid time an employee can take off work to take care of issues related to domestic violence, harassment, or stalking. Safe leave can be used to find a new place to live, to seek legal advice, to appear at court hearings, or to seek counseling related to domestic violence, harassment, or stalking.

3. How much paid time do employees earn?

Starting on January 1, 2017, employees will earn 1 hour of paid leave for every 30 hours the employee works.

4. How much earned sick and safe leave can employees use under the law?

Beginning on January 1, 2017, employees of companies which have fewer than 10 employees can use 24 hours of paid sick and safe leave in a calendar year. Employees of companies which have 10 or more employees can use 40 hours of paid sick and safe leave in a calendar year. Employers can allow employees to use more, however, depending upon company policy.

5. If an employee does not use all of her paid leave hours in a year, can she roll those unused hours over into the next year?

Yes – if an employee does not use all her hours of paid leave in a given year, she can “roll over” the unused hours (up to the applicable limit of 24 or 40 hours, depending on the employer’s size) into the next year. Depending on company policy, employees can also donate some of their unused hours to other employees who may need more paid leave, such as for an employee’s or his or her child’s chronic medical conditions.

6. Who is exempt from this law?

Workers in the building trades and temporary, seasonal, and work-study workers are not covered by this law.

7. When will this law take effect?

Earned sick and safe leave will be mandatory for all employers in Spokane on January 1, 2017. In addition, new business start-ups will have one year from receiving their City business license to come into compliance with the law.

8. How will this law be enforced?

Nationwide, there are a variety of enforcement approaches. In Spokane, the City Council and the City Administration will work together to agree on an enforcement mechanism by no later than October 1, 2016.

9. Will employees be able to cash out unused leave time?

That depends on company policy. However, the law does not require employers to “cash out” unused leave time for employees.

10. If an employer offers all-purpose “paid time off” (“PTO”), does the employer also have to provide sick and safe leave in addition to PTO?

No, if the employer allows the use of PTO for all the same reasons as earned sick and safe leave, and in the same amount, the use of PTO also qualifies as earned sick and safe leave.