

# 10 Things to Do Before Terminating an Employee



# YOU'RE FIRED!

Before proceeding with a termination, ask yourself the following questions. By reviewing this checklist, you can make this dreaded meeting a smoother one.

## Arriving at the decision to terminate

### 1. *What is the reason for termination?*

Many times, the reason is clear – such as a clear violation of a safety policy.

Other times, it isn't. Consider an employee that is difficult to manage, pushes back on everything he's asked to do, and has excessive absenteeism. You have provided several warnings to him, more than any other employee, and he is on a final written warning.

Then, he informed you he had a doctor's appointment for which he had to miss a couple hours of work. He promised to provide you with a doctor's note. You approved the time off. It has now been a week and he hasn't provided the doctor's note. You do not require doctor's notes for this type of absence, but you can't believe he didn't bring it in when he is on a final written warning. There has to be some kind of disciplinary action you can take. Because he's on a final written warning, the next step has to be termination, right?

Well, the employee hasn't committed any violation. Since you do not require doctor's notes for these absences of any other employee, you shouldn't of this employee either.

### 2. *Does the employee know it's coming?*

When you have done a good job of putting the employee on notice through written disciplinary action for ongoing policy violations or poor performance, the termination will not come as a surprise.

### 3. *Are there any "red flags" with the employee?*

Review our Red Flags document before **every** termination. If any of these apply, seek further guidance from an HR Professional or your employment attorney before terminating the employee.

### 4. *Is the decision the result of an investigation?*

You should have the statements that support the decision, including that of the accused, and clear understanding of the violation.

5. *Are you being consistent?*

Consider whether you've had similar situations with other employees in the past and what disciplinary action you took, i.e. past practice. In addition, is this action consistent with your policies and procedures?

**Preparing for the termination meeting**

6. *Have all the termination forms and plan for the final paycheck.*

You should be consistent with the termination forms you provide to all employees at termination. While a termination letter is not required, many employers choose to provide one and should do so consistently.

Make sure that you are providing any forms required by law.

Make sure you are paying final wages in a timely manner, according to your state law.

If you have a confidentiality policy, or any other policy that refers to post-employment obligations, consider providing departing employees with reminders. This can be a simple copy of the policy they acknowledged during employment.

7. *Verify what company assets have been assigned to the employee.*

Consider whether the employee was issued a key, laptop, cell phone, company credit card, company vehicle, etc. and plan for how these will be returned if the employee claims he or she does not have them with him or her. If the employee has a company vehicle, offer a ride if he or she cannot obtain one.

8. *Take precautionary safety measures.*

Consider how the employee will take the news. Especially if the action is unexpected, or there is a history of threats and/or violence, it may be appropriate to take precautionary measures. These can include alerting your security guard if the anticipated meeting, or hiring the service if you don't have it onsite. Another option is contacting authorities.

Consider the employee's access to your network, buildings, etc. Make sure you plan for the best time to terminate the access. Terminating it too early may put the employee on notice of the impending action.

**During the termination meeting**

9. *Have a witness present.*

A witness can help document the meeting. In addition, having two members of management present can help the meeting stay under control.

10. *Exit*

After termination, many employers will escort an employee out of the building. However, plan ahead as the employee may need to go back to their work area to collect their personal belongings. Have a box ready and available to make it easier to carry their things, especially if you know they have many personal items.

Consider whether employees keep personal files or pictures on company computers and how you will allow terminated employees to retrieve them.