

OKLAHOMA NOT OK WITH GUNS IN THE WORKPLACE



From November 1, 2012, Oklahoma handgun owners will have more freedom to carry their weapon, with lesser restraint than before. Yet the “open carry” bill, (SB 1733), has certain conditions and limitations attached to it, one of them being that the firearms cannot be carried to the place of work. Employers have been asked to take immediate action, if an employee is found infringing this rule. Residents of Oklahoma can apply for issuance of guns under the Oklahoma Self-Defense Act, which provides the licenses subject to certain parameters and restrictions that are governed by the Act. Governor Mary Fallin, signed a new amended Act, making it lawful for those with valid handgun licenses to carry their weapons openly, concealed or unconcealed (“open carry”) in many public locations from the first of November onwards. However, contrary to popular belief that the guns can be carried anywhere and anytime, there are some vital exceptions to that right. Licensed individuals are still barred from carrying handguns inside government buildings, on school property and in most of areas of college campuses, at sports venues, and at a few other specified facilities. Another significant stipulation that remained unchanged under the new law is that Oklahoma businesses still have the right to prohibit any and all weapons in their buildings. This means that places have the right to make rules, that guns will not be allowed in their premises, even if, under the new amended law, it is permissible for licensed gun owners to carry their weapons there, they cannot do so. Employers have the right to frame, execute and impose policies that forbid employees, who are licensed to carry weapons, from bringing a handgun, concealed or unconcealed, into the workplace. However, the employees still have the right to keep their guns inside a locked vehicle on the employer’s parking lot. Employers will be well advised to set the rules about bringing guns at the workplace clear. Employees may still be under the delusion that the new law allows them the liberty to carry their licensed weapons to the workplace. Employers should adopt and publish a no-weapons policy banning all weapons from their workplace. However, if you already have a no-weapons rule in place, make it clear to all employers that firearms will not be allowed in the workplace and apprise them of the legal consequences of violating this rule.