

WORKERS TOO SCARED TO TAKE TIME OFF FOR SICKNESS



Workers these days seem reluctant to take sick days and unlike former times, very few opted for them in the past 3 months -- and the feeble economy may be the reason for their behavior. In data released this week by Bloomberg BNA, in the first three months of 2011, sick days accounted for an average of just 0.7 percent of all scheduled worker days. According to the *Nashville Business Journal*, that is less than half the rate at which pre-recession workers were taking leave. The Report goes on to reveal that impulsive job absences, excluding long-term absences and partial days off, averaged 0.7 percent of scheduled worker days in the first quarter, up slightly from 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011. It seems that the gloomy job market has fuelled all pervasive fear and suspicion amongst workers, who are too scared about losing their jobs, to take time off for sickness or holidays. Although it cannot be pinpointed with specific assurance that sick days have declined owing to the poor economy, but other developments evidenced by the Bloomberg BNA report, do suggest that the workforce today is overstrained and has little room for relaxation or mistakes and would much rather forego vacation days or sick leaves, rather than risk losing their jobs. *Mother Jones* featured a series last year that showed that US productivity increased steadily over the last 30 years, but the wages have remained stagnant. There is a huge increase in the number of middle-class and professional employees who put in 50 plus hours per week. A poll conducted by Harris Interactive, showed a strange phenomenon, that more than half of all Americans, failed to avail of their full quota of allotted vacation days last year. This, the survey attributed to an apprehension and nervousness amongst workers that workers who are not seen at the workplace often are the workers who get laid off, when such situations arise. In a 2011 report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States was ranked twenty-third on a list of developed nations for work-life balance.

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