

Pay employees for their 'pre-work' work

When computer-based employees start the day by firing up their PCs and logging on to the network, do those minutes count as compensable time? Yes, as one employer found out the hard way last week.

Humana, a Louisville-based health services company, must pay more than \$1 million to at least 2,500 call-center employees in a settlement with the Labor Department. Labor said Humana "failed to record and properly compensate" employees for time worked off the clock powering up their equipment, linking to the network and accessing necessary programs to perform their duties. Because those employees aren't able to do their jobs without first performing such start-up duties, the time is considered work time. The employees received about \$400 each in the settlement.

Labor Department rules say you must pay for "all time an employee is on duty or at a prescribed place of work and any time that an employee is suffered or permitted to work. This would generally include work performed at home, travel time, waiting time, training and probationary periods."