



<b>From:</b>	Ms. Murielle Meltenoven-Commissioner of Labour
<b>To:</b>	Business houses
<b>Subject:</b>	Post-earthquake Employment arrangements for business located at the CBD area and other affected area outside the CBD
<b>Date:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2025

**Subject: Directive on post-earthquake employment arrangements for business located at the CBD area and other affected area outside the CBD**

The Department of Labour and Employment Services deeply sympathizes with those who have lost their loved ones and those who have been injured during last year December 7.4 earthquake that struck the heart of Port Vila.

As a result, as we all acknowledge, many business houses have been profoundly affected and suffered damages and lost number of their employees.

The Department further wishes to inform that it has taken a step forward in assessing the impacts through a business survey that has been conducted from 21 to 24 January 2025 in partnership with the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), representing the Private Sector.

The quantitative and qualitative data that has been collected, cleaned and statistically analysed are vital for the Government policy response, especially at the current aftermath.

Data shows that out of business houses that we have interviewed in the CBD area and other affected area the three main business sector that have been deeply affected were Wholesale and Retail, followed by Food and Beverage and Tourism industry. Report of the survey can be accessible on Department of Labour website: <https://dol.gov.vu/>

Moving forward, to assist the Employers that were operating within the CBD area and affected area outside CBD to effectively manage their employee's employment and address their welfare especially in this recovery process, we share below some of the recommendations that can be actioned. They are developed based on ILO reports and best practices and by virtue of domestic labour laws and regulations.

- **Enhancing Digital Operations for Economic Recovery:** Offering an opportunity for recovery through support in social media, websites, and digital marketing to improve market access.
- **Addressing Business Relocation Challenges:** Many businesses are relocating, affecting their operations and customer base. Digitalization is suggested to mitigate these impacts.



- Adapting Work Conditions for Psychological Well-being: Improving employee well-being through work arrangements, mental health support, and trauma-informed practices to reduce psychological burden and enhance productivity.
- Disaster Preparedness and Resilience: Preparations for possible future natural disasters must be integrated into the workplace culture. Strategic plans and emergency action plans should commence to minimize losses and ensure continuity of business operations.
- Rotate Employees on annual leave basis especially those with outstanding annual leave
- Rotate employees on unpaid leave by reducing days of work but employees can still get paid on casual basis 2/3 days weekly for now but still on continuous employment
- Release staff while paying their severance along with salaries on a fortnight basis while they are at home but still without termination and still on continuous employment.
- Employers must also think about welfare of staff at this time and not abuse this situation to terminate employees.
- Any employer proposing to dismiss or apply a mass redundancy of ten or more employees at 1 establishment within a period of 30 days or less shall notify the Commissioner in writing of his proposal at least 30 days before the first of those dismissals is proposed to take place.

Whilst we acknowledge the challenges that the above measures might represent for business houses, especially those located within the CBD area, we firmly believe that the business survey that we've conducted will be of valuable information for Government policy response.

If you are not sure of employment measures to be taken, we will be pleased to assist you with your queries anytime in our Office located at Independence Park, Naniu Compound.

Yours truly,

Murielle Meynover

**COMMISSIONER OF LABOUR**

Department of Labour and Employment Services