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Labor and Employment Alert: Tennessee Requires New Signage to Prohibit Firearms on Employers' Property

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Under Tennessee law, employers may generally prohibit employees and others from possessing weapons (including firearms) on their property. The key exception to this rule involves storing firearms in personal vehicles parked on the employer's property by individuals with lawful handgun carry permits. Otherwise, in order to prohibit weapons or firearms on its property, an employer must prominently post certain signage containing either statutorily prescribed wording or the pictogram of the universal red circle with a slash over a weapon.

Recently, Tennessee amended these signage requirements. Now, in order to prohibit firearms on its property, an employer must post a sign that includes the phrase "NO FIREARMS ALLOWED" measuring at least one inch high and eight inches wide and the phrase "as authorized by T.C.A. §39-17-1359." The latter phrase must be "plainly visible" but can otherwise be of any size. In addition, the sign must also contain a pictorial representation of a circle with a 45 degree diagonal line (i.e., a slash) through the circle and an image of a firearm under the diagonal line. This picture must be at least four inches high and four inches wide.

The law still allows employers to prohibit "weapons" in addition to "firearms." Therefore, it is likely that an employer can continue to post signs that include the word "weapons" so long as the signs otherwise comply with the new requirements regarding "firearms." Further, employers can still prohibit the possession of firearms on their property – they just have to post the new signage. Also unchanged is the requirement that such signs be posted in English in "prominent locations," including the entrances primarily used by those entering the property or building where firearms are prohibited.

The new signage requirements are effective July 1, 2016. However, employers who had posted signs before January 1, 2015, have until January 1, 2018 to post the new signage. Contact your Vorys lawyer if you have questions about concealed carry laws and posting requirements in states in which you operate.