

**GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO DECLARES PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY
FOR DENGUE FEVER TRIGGERING ADDITIONAL PAID SICK LEAVE**

On March 25, 2024, the Puerto Rico Secretary of Health, Dr. Carlos Mellado, issued Administrative Order No. 2024-589 declaring a public health “State of Emergency” due to the rapid spike in the number of dengue fever cases reported during the first months of 2024. This declaration triggers the provisions of Law No. 37-2020 (“Law 37”), which provides employees who have—or are suspected of having—an illness covered by the declaration of a “State of Emergency,” with an additional paid leave of up to five working-days. The Administrative Order went into effect immediately and will last for 90 days or until June 23, 2024, unless extended by the Secretary.

As the result of this State of Emergency declaration, covered employees affected by dengue are *entitled* to use all their accrued vacation and sick leave days, as well as any other paid leave or benefit the employee may be eligible to receive. If, upon exhausting all available leaves, the employee continues to be afflicted with the covered sickness, the employee will then be entitled to this emergency paid leave of up to five working days to cover their dengue fever-related absences.

As this special leave results from an amendment to Law No. 180-1998, which regulates mandatory vacation and sick time benefits for hourly employees, employees classified as “executives,” “administrators,” and “professionals,” as such terms are defined in the *Fair Labor Standards Act* and Puerto Rico’s Regulation 13, are excluded from the emergency paid leave provided in Law 37.

If you require additional information or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

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