



Farm Employers: New Federal I-9 Form Required

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It has been in the works for a while and the Citizenship and Immigration Services recently published a revised I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Form. Employers are allowed to start using the new form now, but are permitted to continue using the previous version until May 7, 2013. Starting May 8, 2013 employers must utilize the new form.

The form is very similar but the new form has a few key revisions including:

- Improving the form's instructions to add more clarity
- Changing the layout of the form in effort to reduce errors and the actual form is now two pages versus one, not including instructions
- Adding data fields, including the employee's foreign passport information and telephone and email address (if applicable)

For your current existing employees, a new I-9 form does not need to be completed unless re-verification is necessary. Remember an expired driver's license does not require a new I-9 form. The new form is available at the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf. I recommend starting to use the new form now and reading all instructions carefully.

Not following the rules can get costly; penalties for errors on I-9s can be up to \$1100 per error. Employers have a false belief that employees have three days to complete section 1 of the I-9 which is not the case. Employees must complete section 1 with their name, address, date of birth, social security number and work eligibility status *on or before their first date of employment*.

The employer has three days to complete section two where you add the verification of their documentation for proof of eligible employment. Two other quick tips: do not complete any portion of Section 1 for your employees unless you are going to sign and complete the "Preparer/Translator" fields and do not highlight sections to be filled by the employees.

As always, I recommend doing a quick internal audit of your I-9s once a year.

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