



Friday, Mar 18, 2011

Posted on Fri, Mar. 18, 2011

S.C. licensing agency to cut 44 jobs

Labor, Licensing and Regulation says goal is to increase efficiency and accountability

By RODDIE BURRIS
rburris@thestate.com

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation said it is eliminating 44 positions — about 10 percent of its workforce — and reassigning 29 other workers in what the agency called a reorganization move this week.

The 73 affected employees are part of the agency's Professional and Occupational Licensing Division, responsible for handling initial licensure applications and renewals, investigating alleged misconduct complaints by licensees, and overseeing other board needs.

An agency spokesperson said the reorganization would take about two weeks to complete, and the agency posted an alert to that effect on its website.

The agency sent out a statement saying the reorganization would make the division run more effectively and be more accountable to customers.

"We identified a great number of inefficiencies, the inability to track processes and procedures, and a lack of accountability," the released statement read.

"This reorganization is the first step in allowing (Labor, Licensing and Regulation) to serve the citizens of South Carolina in a more expedient manner," the statement continued.

Spokeswoman Lesia Kudelka declined to release specific details regarding the inefficiencies or lack of accountability.

Gov. Nikki Haley appointed a Charleston labor attorney, Catherine Templeton, as the agency's new director last December.

The agency, which handles business licensing and supports professional boards that regulate certain industries, had come under increasing criticism from lawmakers who cited constituent complaints that licensing took too long.

A request Thursday to interview Templeton by phone was unsuccessful.

The laid-off workers include 31 full-time employees and another 13 temporary and contract workers, from a 417-person work force.