Fit-Friendly Companies Fact Sheet

The Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition Program
A key element of the American Heart Association’s national movement that calls on all Americans and their employers to create a culture of physical activity and health to live longer, heart-healthier lives through walking is the Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition Program.

Designed to be a catalyst for positive change in American business, the program recognizes employers who champion the health of their employees by creating physical activity programs within the workplace. The program is also meant to encourage other companies to participate and demonstrate similar physical activity practices for their employees. Companies may earn recognition by implementing physical activity practices such as:
  • Providing walking routes,
  • Promoting walking programs, online newsletters, and tracking tools to motivate employees, and
  • Allowing staff to wear athletic shoes in the workplace on designated “sneaker days.”

Why is the Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition Program important?
Adult Americans spend a majority of their waking hours at work, and many are in sedentary careers. With obesity costing American businesses $12.7 billion per year in medical expenses and $225.8 billion in health-related productivity losses\(^1\), any program that increases physical activity of employees will impact the bottom line.

Specifically, studies suggest that implementing a worksite physical activity program and promoting a culture of activity will help companies:
  • Increase productivity,
  • Reduce absenteeism,
  • Lower turnover, and
  • Reduce healthcare costs\(^{ii}\).

What does the Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition Program provide to participating companies?
  • Employee access to program resources, including the free Start! Walking Program and My Start! Online fitness tracker
  • Materials that help promote company wellness programs to employees
  • Newsletter templates for internal distribution to employees
  • Consultation with a Fit-Friendly Mentor

How do companies gain “recognized” status in the Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition Program?
  • Company CEO signs a pledge of participation
  • The American Heart Association offers resources, materials, direct consultation and support
  • Upon achieving specified goals, the company submits an application for recognition (two annual deadlines, January 20, July 20)
  • An American Heart Association Volunteer Panel reviews the application for recognition status

What do “recognized” companies receive?
  • Recognition on the American Heart Association’s national and local websites
  • Recognition by the American Heart Association at local events and in recognition program communication materials
  • The right to use the program’s annual recognition seal for internal communications to employees and external communications related specifically to employment recruitment
  • An official recognition letter and recognition plaque sent by the American Heart Association

How do we get started?
  • Find more information at startwalkingnow.org
  • Contact your local American Heart Association office at cherish.hart@heart.org or 206.834.8638.

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\(^1\)Stewart WF, Ricci JA, Chee E, Morganstein D. Lost productive work time costs from health conditions in the United States; results from the American productivity audit. J Occup Environ Med. 2003;45(12):1234-1246