



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Majority of U.S. Companies Worried About Employee Stress Levels in Current Economy, According to Free & Clear® Poll

SEATTLE, November 11, 2008 – The recent economic downturn has increased stress levels across the country, and U.S. employers are taking notice. According to a new poll by Free & Clear, a national leader in healthy behavior change, 86 percent of companies are concerned about the level of stress among their employees, and 88 percent of employers (nearly nine out of ten) believe the tough economy has had a negative effect on workers' stress levels.

“U.S. companies are seeing the impact of the economy reflected in the health and wellbeing of their employees,” said Tim McAfee, Free & Clear’s Chief Medical Officer. “Our poll shows that employers are worried about the effects of stress and want to do something about it. While an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for workers having trouble dealing with stress is a good first step, companies may need to consider more intensive measures to address stress and the unhealthy behaviors that accompany it.”

Most employers Free & Clear surveyed (89 percent) agree that the level of stress among their workforce has increased recently; the impact of stress on a person’s health is significant. Between 70 percent and 80 percent of doctor office visits are due to stress-related illnesses, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Stress, which often manifests itself in overeating, smoking and sleeplessness, has been tied to colds, gastrointestinal problems and more serious ailments, including heart disease.

“Many Americans turn to unhealthy coping strategies, like smoking and overeating, when they are unable to manage stress,” said Dr. Jennifer Lovejoy, Free & Clear’s Executive Director of Weight and Nutrition Services. “With tobacco use costing employers up to \$5,455 per smoker and obesity costing up to \$1,991 per overweight employee in excess costs annually, businesses need to offer help to their employees to manage both stress and the unhealthy behaviors that tend to accompany it.”

For this poll, Free & Clear surveyed human resources and benefits professionals in 164 companies nationwide. Of the companies surveyed, 80 percent had more than 3,000 employees.



About Free & Clear, Inc.

Free & Clear, Inc., the healthy behaviors company, specializes in phone-based cognitive behavioral coaching and web-based learning to help employers measurably improve the overall health and productivity of their workforces. Free & Clear's evidence-based programs address modifiable health risks that contribute to chronic disease: tobacco use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity and stress. More than 50 million people have access to the Free & Clear Quit For Life® Program, the nation's leading tobacco cessation program, which has had its proof of effectiveness published in multiple peer-reviewed, scientific journals over the course of more than 20 years. The Mind & Body™ Program has been developed by nationally recognized experts and is based on the most up-to-date, clinically proven science available on weight management and obesity prevention. Free & Clear is based in Seattle, Washington. More information about Free & Clear can be found at www.freeclear.com.

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