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New Rules Now Regulate Traveling Sales Crews; Protect Youth, Consumers

***Under Malinda's Act, crews must have DWD-issued sales permits, badges;
Other provisions also ensure worker, public safety in response to Janesville tragedy***

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman announced today that new rules are now in place to regulate traveling sales crews, protecting both workers and consumers, in response to an accident that claimed the lives of seven young adults in Janesville in 1999.

“The strong regulations we have implemented under Malinda’s Act will serve to prevent similar tragedies and help bring closure to all those affected by what happened in Janesville,” Secretary Gassman said. “The accident revealed an industry that was unregulated and too often abusive to its employees, exposing them to hazardous working conditions. Now, thanks to Governor Doyle and the Legislature, we have tough regulations in place.”

Secretary Gassman noted that in 1999, then Attorney General Jim Doyle prosecuted those responsible for the crash that claimed seven lives and seriously injured four more youth. Secretary Gassman also praised Senator Jon Erpenbach of Waunakee, who pressed for regulation of the industry. Last year, Governor Doyle signed the legislation, named Malinda’s Act, for 18-year-old Malinda Turvey of Verona, who was among the victims.

As of April 1, 2010, employers of traveling sales crews are required to obtain sales permits for each crew member. When entering a community, crew members are required to have their sales permit stamped by the municipal clerk. Each crew member must carry the stamped permit with them when selling and must produce the permit upon request by potential customers or police officers.

The new law serves to protect the safety of those who work in traveling sales crews and to protect consumers from crews that might commit criminal acts in the course of contacting those consumers.

The law defines “traveling sales crews” as two or more individuals who are employed as salespersons, travel together in a group, and are absent overnight from their permanent places of residence for the purpose of selling consumer goods or services to consumers from house to house, on streets or in public places.

Businesses that either recruit or use traveling sales crews must register with DWD’s Equal Rights Division. Registration forms are available online at http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/labor_standards_bureau/traveling_sales_crew.htm. They can also be obtained by calling 608-266-6861 or by writing to DWD Equal Rights Division, P.O. Box 8928, Madison, WI 53708.

Individuals encountering sales crews that cannot or will not produce their stamped permit can report the problem to DWD’s Equal Rights Division by calling 608-266-6861.