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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Work and the Eclipse

ECLIPSE WATCHERS COULD COST EMPLOYERS $694 MILLION

CHICAGO, August 17, 2017 – For the first time since 1979, the United States will have a front-row seat to a total solar eclipse stretching 70 miles wide and following a path from Oregon to South Carolina. While this event is exciting, much to many employers' dismay, it is taking place right in the middle of the Monday workday, potentially disrupting productivity.

Challenger estimates that workers will need approximately 20 minutes to gather their viewing equipment and find a spot to watch the two- to two-and-a-half-minute solar event. How much money could this total solar eclipse really cost?

$694 million, according to an analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data by global outplacement and executive coaching firm, Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

According to the BLS' most recent American Time Use Survey in 2016, 82.8 percent of employed people worked on an average weekday. Additionally, according to the most recent data on flexible schedules from the BLS taken in 2004, 14.8 percent of the employed worked a shift other than a day shift.

Using average hourly wage data and the number of full-time employed workers 16 and over, the cost could hit almost $700 million nationally.

The cost to states and metro areas directly in the path of the eclipse, where traffic is expected to increase substantially, could see almost $200 million in lost productivity combined.

In fact, considering only Chicago, the cost to employers could hit **$28 million.**

"That is not to say employers need to board their windows and keep employees locked up in conference room meetings until the eclipse ends. Rather, looking for how to turn this lack of productivity into a way to increase morale and strengthen the team is a much better use of the eclipse," said Andrew Challenger, Vice President of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

It's going to be pretty difficult to get people to keep working when the solar eclipse is happening, and preventing employees from viewing it will probably do more to harm morale than to increase productivity.

"Since this is happening over the lunch hours, the financial impact is minimal. It offers a great opportunity to boost morale. Employers could offer lunch to their staff, give instructions on how to make viewing devices, and watch together as a team," said Challenger.

"Building in time around lunch to mark the special occasion will encourage employees to interact and have something to be excited about," he added.

Employers could also start eclipse-related contests for employees. For example, they could have employees bake treats or take photos in celebration of the event and choose the most creative entry as a winner. Potential prizes could be a half day of work or a gift card to Starbucks or a local restaurant.

"A loss of productivity does not necessarily mean that good things cannot come out of this eclipse. By considering how this event may impact employee morale, companies can turn this potential monetary loss to a gain when it comes to employee satisfaction," said Challenger.

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Eclipse and Productivity Math

National Cost to Employers: $694,098,123

87,307,940 – Estimated number of workers who will be at work during the eclipse

$7.95 – Cost of 20 minutes of unproductive time per worker due to the eclipse based on the average hourly wage of $23.86

123,761,000 – Full-time workers aged 16 and over
Source: BLS Current Population Survey 2016

14.8 Percent – Percentage of workers who work a shift other than the day shift, including evening, night, irregular shifts, or rotating shifts
Source: BLS Data on Flexible and Night Shifts 2004

82.8 Percent – Percentage of workers who work on an average weekday
Source: BLS American Time Use Survey 2016