

levels. The federal government has established a minimum salary for social-security calculations, on which both contributions and benefits are based.

Health Care: Health care is guaranteed to all citizens and is covered in Mexico by social security, social assistance, private health centres, or specialist clinics. Various social assistance agencies, which are wholly financed by the government, guarantee health care to every Mexican citizen.

Work Week: The Mexican Constitution lays down an eight-hour working day with one day a week compulsory rest. The legal maximum work week is therefore 48 hours. Overtime is usually paid at double time for the first nine hours in excess of 48, after which triple time is paid.

Vacation: A worker earns six vacation days after working one year, with two additional days for each of the next four years. After five years, two vacation days are added for each five-year period. Vacation time must be paid in full, together with a premium of 25 percent of the regular salary for each vacation day.

Holidays: There are five statutory holidays that are fully paid.

Other Benefits: Profit-sharing is regulated and entitles employees to a share in 10 percent of the company's taxable net revenues. Workers are also entitled to an annual year-end (Christmas) bonus of at least 15 days of salary. Women are allowed 12 weeks off for maternity leave and must be guaranteed a position on returning.

Various non-regulated benefits are often provided by employers. These can include meals at work, transportation to the work place, discount coupons which are honoured in grocery stores and market places, and housing benefits. Compensation packages which include day-care, sports facilities, education for children, an extra month's pay and Christmas bonuses are now commonplace in many industries. Worker benefit packages can thus comprise a significant portion of the overall compensation plan.

Business Travel

Visas: A tourist card in a valid passport does not entitle the foreign visitor to carry on business operations. Visitors who plan to do business in Mexico should enter the country on a non-immigrant visa as an employee of a company, or as a self-employed individual. Those travelling on tourist visas are not allowed to receive remuneration from Mexican

In some manufacturing regions, these additional benefits have become the norm. An employer may find they represent the minimum conditions required to attract an appropriately skilled workforce or to satisfy union demands. This is especially the case for workers such as tool and die makers whose skills are in short supply. Foreign employers are finding that they have to offer similar non-compulsory benefits if they are to get appropriately-trained workers or experienced managers.

The extensive benefit packages mentioned above constitute hidden costs that, in effect, decrease the wage gap between Mexican workers and those in either Canada or the United States. In some cases, benefits can increase the base wage rate by as much as 50 to 100 percent.

Trade Unions: With its revolutionary history, Mexico's labour force is highly organized. Collective bargaining is a long-established element of labour-management relations and the rights of labour unions have been entrenched in the Mexican constitution since 1917. About 8 million Mexican workers or 35 percent of the work force are unionized but in manufacturing that proportion rises to as much as 90 percent.

Mexican law permits the workers in any company with more than 20 employees to set up a union. Organized labour groups have the right to request that a company enter into a collective contract and recognize the union as the sole bargaining agent for its employees. Labour unions are given broad rights, including the right to strike during negotiations and the right to stage strikes in sympathy with other unions, but management-labour relations are relatively harmonious and labour disputes are infrequent and generally settled swiftly. The Mexican Confederation of Workers (*Confederación de Trabajadores de México, CTM*), with over 5 million members, is the country's largest labour organization and is a major force in Mexico's political and economic life. Labour participates with both government and the private sector in El Pacto, the national plan for inflation control.

sources. Visas are readily obtained from Mexican consulates throughout the world.

Currency: The monetary unit is the peso which is subdivided into 100 centavos. To denote Mexican currency, Ps \$ is used before the amount. If the documents are for