Alcohol and/or Drug Abuse Awareness in the Workplace

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The Facts…

• In the U.S. positive tests for alcohol and drug use in workplaces has increased

• majority of workers who test positive work in safety-sensitive positions (truck drivers, aviation, transportation industry)

• Since 2017, over 10M tests administered; 4% positive – 13 year high

• And, Busch Light beer sales have increased 44% since Coronavirus-19 pandemic appeared; other brands have increased by double digits
According to a survey conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Top 15 Most Used Drugs in America in 2016 were:

- Alcohol: 136.7 million
- Cigarettes: 63.4 million
- Marijuana: 23.9 million
- Pain Relievers: 3.4 million
- Tranquilizers: 1.9 million
- Cocaine: 1.8 million
- Stimulants: 1.7 million
- Methamphetamine: 667,000
- Ecstasy: 619,000
- Inhalants: 600,000
- Sedatives: 497,000
- Heroin: 475,000
- Crack: 432,000
- LSD: 374,000
- PCP: 21,000
What are the risks of abuse to employees and companies?

- Results in accidents, injuries, or fatalities
- Impacts morale of co-workers
- Damages relationships
- Results in poor work performance
- Gives company a negative image
Alcohol use in the U.S.

• 1/3 of Americans drink very little or nothing at all
• Of the remaining 2/3,
  • 30% drink 2-3 drinks per week
  • 20% drink 1-2 drinks per day
  • 10% drink 4-10 drinks per day
  • 10% drink over 10 drinks per day
What is considered a “Standard Drink?”

12 fl oz of regular beer = 8–9 fl oz of malt liquor (shown in a 12 oz glass) = 5 fl oz of table wine = 1.5 fl oz shot of 80-proof spirits (whiskey, gin, rum, vodka, tequila, etc.)

about 5% alcohol

about 7% alcohol

about 12% alcohol

about 40% alcohol

The percent of “pure” alcohol, expressed here as alcohol by volume (alc/vol), varies by beverage.

Safety without shortcuts.
What is Binge Drinking?

• This typically happens when men consume 5 or more drinks or women consume 4 or more drinks in about 2 hours.

• Most people who binge drink are not alcohol dependent. One in six US adults binge drinks about four times a month, consuming about eight drinks per binge.
Marijuana Facts

• One of the most frequently used illicit drugs of abuse in the U.S. and most detected on drug screens
• There are approximately 400 chemicals in marijuana, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the chemical that provides the mind-altering effect
  • Average amount of THC in the early 90’s: 4%
  • Average amount of THC in 2017: 12%-28%
The Opioid Epidemic

• More than 70% of U.S. employers are feeling the impact of prescription drug misuse in their workplaces
• Over 289 millions prescriptions for painkillers are written each year in the United States
• The widespread use of prescription painkillers has resulted in a big increase in addiction, emergency room visits, and overdose deaths throughout the country
• Since 1999, the number of prescription painkiller deaths increased by more than 300%
• 130 people die every day from Prescription Drug overdoses
Opioid abuse facts

• Opioid painkillers compromise employee safety
• Workers who are prescribed opioids have significantly higher worker’s comp claims
• Opioid painkillers can delay recovery and ability to return to work
• Using opioids increases the likelihood of disability claims
What’s the cost to employers when employees abuse substances?

- Drug abuse costs employers $81 Billion annually
- Substance abusers are:
  - 4 Times more likely to be involved in an accident
  - 40% of all industrial fatalities on worksites are due to substance abuse
- Drug and alcohol users are 30% less productive than non-users
What are the warning signs that someone is using on the job?

- Poor work performance
- Patterns of absenteeism (day before or after paydays, frequent Monday or Friday absences)
- Tardiness
- Excessive use of sick leave/frequent excuses
- Co-workers covering or making excuses
- Negative attitude/mood swings
- Hangovers, slurred speech, bloodshot eyes, pinpointed or dilated pupils, etc.
- Changes in appearance/hygiene, smells of alcohol or drugs
- Avoiding supervision/isolation
What are the reasons why some employees use on the job?

- High stress; anxiety, depression
- Low job satisfaction
- Boredom
- Fatigue
- No control over substance use
- Family, marital, financial problems
- Remote (working from home), irregular supervision
What should you do?

• DO NOT ignore the problem
• DO NOT cover for someone that needs help
• DO NOT work with someone who is impaired and presents a safety risk
• DO NOT assume that addiction can’t happen to anyone, a co-worker, or someone who works for you
What else can you do?

- Notify supervisor, HR Dept if an employee is having a problem
- Contact Employee Assistance Program
- Be supportive of the person that wants help to stay sober
- Recognize how abuse impacts the company’s bottom line
- Enact and enforce strong company drug policies
- Expand drug panel testing to include opioids
- Train supervisors and employees to spot the first signs of substance abuse / misuse
- Treat substance abuse as a disease
The bottom Line...

- If drinking or drug use causes problems at work, at home, or in a person’s life, then drinking or drug use is a problem

- ¼ of our lives are spent at work and our work environment must be safe from hazards

- Chemical substance testing can help prevent someone from being in an accident, being seriously hurt or hurting someone else
"You're fired, Jack. The lab results just came back, and you tested positive for Coke."
Employer Resources:

www.nsc.org/forms/substance-use-employer-calculator

- Easy to use tool that computes cost of substance use; specific to industries and states

https://www.safenebraska.org/safe-home-play/prescription-drug-abuse-employers-guide

- Guide to adopting drug free workplace policies