

SAFETY MATTERS



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Drug Free Workplace

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It has been estimated that 1 in 10 employees in this country's workforce has a substance abuse problem. Substance abuse can cause a deterioration of work performance, lack of dependability, and recklessness that can threaten personal safety and the safety of others, as well as the integrity of the company and its reputation.

Substance abuse in the workplace is also very costly. It has been estimated that substance abuse costs employers more than \$81 billion annually.

Studies show that alcohol and drug abusers are far less productive, performing at only 67 percent of their work potential. Studies also show they use three times as many sick days, are three times more likely to have an accident on the job and five times more likely to file workers' compensation claims. Forty-seven percent of all industrial injuries are attributed to substance abuse. In addition, up to 40 percent of industrial fatalities can be linked to substance abuse.

The benefits of having a drug free policy in your workplace are evident in the statistics. Benefits include a healthy, productive workforce, saving money and fewer workplace incidents, to name a few. It is important to consider what complications alcohol and drug abuse could cause in your workplace. Think about which jobs require good judgment, coordination, alertness, and consider other skills that could be impaired by substance abuse.

In general, a drug free policy:

- Prohibits the possession, use, or sale of drugs or alcohol on workplace premises;

- Forbids working under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- Provides assistance for employees who want help for an abuse problem; and
- Imposes discipline up to and including termination on those who refuse help and continue to abuse drugs or alcohol on the job.

It is important to have your written program reviewed by legal counsel before putting it into practice. There are many state laws and federal regulations that impact how drug and alcohol prevention is implemented in the workplace. Many states have enacted drug-free workplace laws and regulations and some provide workers' compensation discounts for implementing specific types of drug-free workplace programs. Legal counsel can provide guidance specific to your state.

Implementations include communicating the workplace policy, monitoring performance, administering discipline and documenting incidents. As an employer or supervisor, make sure you understand your organization's drug free policy; including the procedures for Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or outside referrals. Also, familiarize yourself with drug testing processes that are a part of the program. Remember, key components in a drug free workplace program must include confidentiality and documentation.

Source: BLR - Business & Legal Resources