

news & notes

DRUGS AND THE LAW

Here are the various laws that deal with substance abuse in the workplace:

The **Drug-Free Workplace Act** applies to recipients of federal grants or contracts of \$25,000 or more. Requirements include:

- Enforced written drug-free workplace policy
- Educating employees about drug abuse dangers and treatments
- Imposing sanctions and/or demanding treatment for employees convicted of a drug-related crime in the workplace and notifying the contracting agency of the conviction

The **Americans with Disabilities Act** does not consider current use of illegal drugs a disability. Employers may:

- Ban workplace drug and alcohol use or working under their influence.
- Fire or refuse to hire a current user of illegal drugs.

The **Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act** requires random drug and alcohol testing of safety-sensitive employees in the aviation, highway, rail, and mass transit industries, with follow-up tests to confirm any positive results.

Know your employer's policies on drugs in the workplace, including:

- Banning drugs at work or working under their influence
- Penalties for workplace use, possession, or sale of illegal drugs
- Drug testing
- Employee assistance programs for drug abuse problems



Carl's coworkers began to suspect that he had a catnip problem.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

April 2012

Substance Abuse Is a Safety Hazard *April is Substance Abuse Awareness Month*

This month is a good time to review the hazards of using various illegal and legal substances on the job. First of all, be aware that most substance abusers are employed, so drug abuse is very much a workplace hazard. You also need to know that people frequently become addicted to sedatives, sleeping pills, and other prescription drugs, so it's not just illegal substances that can be hazardous in the workplace.

Realize that working under the influence affects reflexes and reaction time, concentration, perceptions, and judgment—all of which make a person working under the influence an accident waiting to happen. In fact, people who work under the influence of drugs or alcohol are three to four times more likely to have an accident. And while the people who cause accidents are often the ones who are injured, the accidents they cause can also injure other people.

Here are some important facts to know about specific drugs:

- **Marijuana** is the most common illegal drug used on the job.
- In a survey of callers to the national **cocaine** hotline, 18 percent confessed to stealing from co-workers to support their addiction, and 64 percent admitted that their drug use negatively affected their performance.
- Experts warn that addiction can happen very quickly. In the case of **heroin**, a person could become addicted after just one use.
- Although **alcohol** is a legal substance, it is still a drug, and it can be highly addictive.
- **Inhalants such as airplane glue, paint thinner, aerosols, nitrous oxide, amyl nitrate, and butyl nitrate** contain very hazardous chemicals that can be deadly.

Learn to recognize these signs of possible abuse in yourself or others:

- Frequent work absences and late arrivals
- Poor concentration and coordination
- Slow mental and physical reflexes
- Restlessness, nervousness, paranoia
- Argumentative, defensive, and/or blaming others for problems
- Letting responsibilities slide
- Impaired judgment and decision making
- Mood swings
- Revved-up movements and speech
- Forgetfulness
- Loss of interest in and lack of responsibility for work
- Pushing beyond physical capacity
- Carelessness
- Bizarre or violent behavior

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TRUCKERS AND HANDHELD DEVICES

A ban on the use of handheld mobile phones by commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers took effect January 3. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has published answers to frequently asked questions about the ban. Among them:

- Hands-free use of a mobile telephone is allowed using either a wired or wireless earpiece or the speaker-phone function of the mobile phone.
- CMV drivers are allowed to use push-to-talk mobile communications while driving as long as the driver does not reach for, dial, or hold the actual telephone while driving, and the driver can touch the button from a normal seated position with seat belt fastened.
- The rule covers drivers of CMVs in interstate commerce and drivers who operate a vehicle or transport a quantity of hazardous material requiring placarding under DOT regulations.
- The rule does not require motor carriers to establish written mobile phone policies for their drivers.

OSHA ON RESPIRATORS

OSHA has posted on www.osha.gov a series of 17 videos to help workers learn proper use of respirators on the job. The short videos, nine in English and eight in Spanish, address topics like fit-testing, detecting counterfeit respirators, and training.

The agency's safety and health topics' page on respiratory protection provides training materials, information about respiratory hazards in various industries, and details of OSHA's respiratory protection standard.



Don't Stress About It!

April is Stress Awareness Month

Are you suffering the effects of too much stress? Circle any of the symptoms that you experience regularly:

- Excessive perspiring
- Nail biting or other nervous habits
- Pounding heartbeat
- Upset stomach
- Tense and painful muscles and tension headaches
- Change in eating or sleeping habits
- Moodiness
- Inability to focus
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs

If you circled several symptoms, you may be heading for serious health problems caused by poor stress management. Try these stress-reducing techniques:

- Get a more restful sleep by adjusting room sound, light, and temperature.
- Take warm baths.
- Cut down on caffeine, alcohol, and smoking.
- Exercise, either solo, at a gym, or with a buddy.
- Socialize more—go to the movies with family or friends, have a spring picnic, or throw a party and invite your friends.
- Use deep breathing exercises or get a massage.
- Set aside time for yourself every day.
- Meditate.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

What you need to know

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is responsible for more than 300,000 deaths every year in the United States. Prompt treatment with an AED to restart the heart can save many lives. AEDs are available for less than \$2,000, and as a result, most ambulances and first-response vehicles are now equipped with AEDs. Increasingly, AEDs are also located in public places and many workplaces.

SCA occurs when ventricular fibrillation (VF) takes place or when the heart stops beating altogether. Causes include heart attack, electrocution, and asphyxiation (loss of consciousness and death caused by inadequate oxygen in the work environment, such as in a confined space).

Most often cardiac arrest is due to VF, the uncoordinated beating of the heart, which can be restored to a normal rhythm if treated early with electric shock (defibrillation). The sooner defibrillation is started, the more likely the victim will survive. The optimum time for defibrillation is 3 to 5 minutes after the onset of the cardiac arrest. Even with an AED at hand, emergency personnel should be called immediately—follow-up treatment at a medical facility will be required.

AEDs are computerized medical devices that can check a person's heart rhythm. They can recognize a rhythm that requires a shock and advise the rescuer when a shock is needed. The AED uses voice prompts, lights, and text messages to instruct the rescuer. Users should complete a short training program on the AED.