



Substance Abuse in the Workplace

Your workers use equipment, handle materials and perhaps drive vehicles whether they work in your office, warehouse, factory or jobsite.

Regardless of the hazards of their tasks, they need to be mentally alert for the sake of their safety and health, the safety and health of coworkers, their productivity and your profitability. Workers under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs and even legal drugs (e.g. sinus pills that cause drowsiness) are not fully mentally alert. They endanger themselves, their coworkers, you, your customers and other nearby persons. The Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration has estimated that abuse of alcohol and other drugs cost U.S. businesses \$102 billion yearly due to lost productivity, accidents, worker turnover and other problems. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimated in a recent year that 10-23% of American workers use dangerous drugs on the job. They report these employees are:

- Up to 4 times more likely to be in a work accident
- 5 times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim
- 2 1/2 times more likely to be absent for 8+ days



This sheet addresses some basics of a substance abuse policy. It is not all-encompassing. The National Safety Council or a local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous can help you in preventing problems as well as identifying and caring for problem workers. Your attorney can help you draft and implement a policy that protects you as you protect your workers.

Substance abuse policy basics include:

Clear comprehensive written policy

- Consider involving employees in drafting the policy, as they may have valuable ideas to contribute
- State why you have implemented your policy (showing you care for them can increase their loyalty to you and make them more likely to adhere to the policy)
- State specifically the behaviors that are banned (e.g. using or selling illegal drugs on the job; operating machines or vehicles while under the influence of any illegal drug, alcohol, or legal drug causing drowsiness)
- State specifically the consequences for workers who violate the policy (e.g. day off without pay; mandatory attendance at rehabilitation class; job transfer; termination)

Train supervisors/foremen

- Give them details of your policy
- Train them in identifying signs of substance abuse
- Train them how to enforce your policy

Train employees

- Ensure workers know that substance abuse will not be tolerated, and encourage them to spread the word that substance abuse will not be tolerated
- Give a copy of your policy to all existing personnel
- Give a copy of your policy to all new hires
- Train them in signs, symptoms and perils of drug abuse

Safety Zone



Conduct substance abuse testing

- Deter substance abuse and identify workers with potential problems through regular testing
- Consult with your attorney about applicable laws
- Use only trained persons to do testing

Implement an employee assistance program

- Use trained persons for this (many firms offer this service on a contractual basis)
- Many employees feeling stress (*e.g. financial, marital*) benefit from this counseling and avoid resorting to alcohol or drugs

Whatever you specify in your policy, be sure to set an example for your workers by obeying it to the letter. Workers are more likely to obey your policy if they see you obeying it. Enforce your policy, too. Workers are more likely to obey it if they learn that violations will not be tolerated. Review your policy periodically and revise as your needs require.

CONTACT INFO:

PHONE: 888.486.7466 ext. 363275

WEB: www.amtrustfinancial.com

EMAIL: AskLC@amtrustgroup.com

MAILING ADDRESS: AmTrust North America - 2605 Enterprise Road, Suite 290, Clearwater, FL 33759

AmTrust maintains this article as a service for its customers. This information is intended to give you a place to start when finding information about a particular safety question. This article is not intended to provide authoritative answers to safety and health questions. Before using the information here, the accuracy and appropriateness of the information to your specific situation should be verified by a person qualified to assess all the factors involved.

This article contains hyperlinks to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. Please be aware that we do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of this outside information. Further, the inclusion of pointers to particular items in hypertext is not intended to reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed or products or services offered by the author of the reference or the organization operating the site on which the reference is maintained.