

American Drug Testing

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

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DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORK-

Accidents and Injuries from Drugs, Part I

Injury is a major cause of death across the age spectrum, and the leading killer of Americans aged 1 through 44 years. Scientists frequently identify the causes of injury as a combination of risky behavior and hazardous environments. Risk-taking behavior and injury are especially common during adolescence and young adulthood. Drug use contributes to injuries among adolescents and young adults because it has negative effects on perception, judgment, and reaction time. A young person under the influence of drugs also has less respect for the welfare of self and others.

The field of research that explores the relationship between injury and drugs other than alcohol is relatively new. This research has been greatly aided by improved drug testing, which allows investigators to detect drugs

in samples of blood, urine, saliva, sweat, or hair. Most of this research occurs in facilities such as hospital

“... Drug use contributes to injuries ... because it has negative effects on perception, judgment, and reaction time.”

trauma centers and emergency departments, where more severely injured victims receive treatment. Other important research is conducted by medical examiners who test for the presence of drugs during an autopsy, which is the close investigation of a deceased person's body to

determine the cause of her or his death. In the case of questionable deaths, autopsy results can lead medical examiners to conclude that injury was the cause. They can then rule these injury deaths as **homicides** or suicides (intentional injury) or accidents

(unintentional injury).

Driving Incidents

Just as drinking and driving create a dangerous mix, illegal drug use poses severe threat of injury to drivers and others on the road with them. A landmark Tennessee study found that over half of drivers stopped by police for reckless driving who tested negative for alcohol use were actually **intoxicated** with drugs. The drugs most frequently detected were cocaine and marijuana. The United States and many other countries are reporting rising numbers of injured motorists testing positive for

marijuana, cocaine, **amphetamines**, or other illegal drugs. These trends probably reflect both real changes in driving under the influence of

drugs and the improving capability of police to test drivers for drugs.

Injuries

An American study on non-fatal injury compared 15,000 substance abusers between the ages of 10 and 64 with a group of 75,000

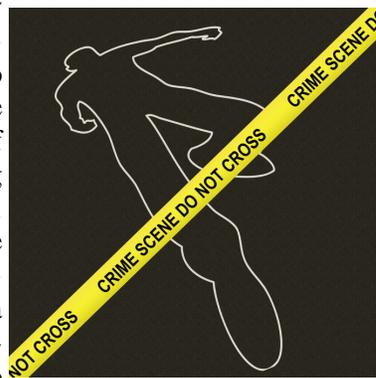
nonabusers to see if their injury patterns varied. Abusers were more likely to be injured than non-abusers. Of subjects categorized as both drug and alcohol abusers, 58 percent sustained an injury over the three years of observation. This compared to 49 percent of those who had abused drugs only, 46 percent of those who had abused only alcohol, and 39 percent of those who had abused neither. With non-abusers as the base of comparison, the likelihood of hospitalization for an injury was four times higher among the combined drug and alcohol abuse group, three times higher among the drug abusers, and twice as high among the alcohol abusers. *Next issue, Part II, “Violent Deaths and Overdoses,”*

For additional information, see the “client area” at www.AmericanDrugTesting.net or call 843-747-4111.



The Drug-Free Workplace Advisor is published by American Drug Testing, a leading drug-free

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