



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 WORKPLACE.

Cost of Drug Abuse, Part I

Employers finding screenings ensure safer workplace. Part I of a two part series.

Shawn Tomlinson is never sure when his number will come up. When it does, he gets an unplanned hair trim.

"It's really no big deal. It takes a few minutes and is more of an inconvenience because you have to stop what you're doing," said Tomlinson, a gold refiner who has worked at

the Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining Co. since 1981.

As a condition of employment, Tomlinson and the mine's 299 other workers — from the top executive down — must consent to random drug testing by relinquishing a few locks of hair whenever a computer selects their employee number.

The Drug-Free Workplace Advisor is a resource of



Robert B. Dodenhoff
President

American Drug Testing, the Lowcountry's premier drug-free workplace administrator, and testing company. Let us help you maintain

a drug-free workplace. Contact us at (843) 747-4111.

"When we first started doing it in 1989, people thought it was getting into their private life. Then they got used to it, and now, it's part of their work," Tomlinson said.

"...employees who abuse alcohol or drugs are more likely to have extended absences from work, show up late, be involved in workplace accidents and file workers' compensation claims. ."

It's been 20 years since employers began testing employees for drug and alcohol use to detect and control substance abuse. Since then, drug testing has become commonplace in the workplace. It is estimated that half of the nation's work force is employed by firms that conduct drug testing. The intent: to improve employee absenteeism, productivity and job-site safety.

COST OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse costs U.S. businesses more than \$81 billion in lost productivity and turnover annually, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which estimates that 73 percent of drug users, or 8.1 mil-

lion workers, are employed.

Studies show that employees who abuse alcohol or drugs are more likely to have extended absences from work, show up late, be involved in workplace accidents and file workers' compensation claims.

"I don't see anything wrong with drug testing — it's a way for employers to make sure they have a safe work environment and the operation isn't hindered," said Tony Nieves, a local UPS package handler who had to be tested to get his job.

Several high-profile accidents in which drugs or alcohol were involved, including the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill and a 1987 train collision in Maryland, brought awareness to the issue and spurred legislation.

The federal government has had a Drug-Free Federal Workplace program since 1986. All federal employees are required to be drug tested. Contractors and those who receive grants from federal agencies also must provide drug-free workplaces. And companies with employees that use commercial-class drivers licenses must have a testing system.

State and city governments have enacted programs, and many private-sector employers have followed suit, now performing drug testing before

hiring candidates, after an accident while on the clock and at random during work hours.

"Employers use drug testing to assist them in employing quality employees, ultimately saving the company



money," said Christy Manar, membership director for the Drug & Alcohol Testing Industry Association. The Washington, D.C.-based organization offers training, certification and accreditation programs for specimen collectors and others in the industry.

Next Issue: Part II, The Cost of Drug Abuse.

Source: the Gazette

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