

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-

Top 12 Reasons a Drug-Free Workplace Program Goes Bad, 2

6. The policy includes reasonable suspicion testing, but supervisors never exercise it because they're afraid of making a wrong call.

Thoroughly training supervisors is key. They must understand and feel comfortable identifying the factors that constitute "reasonable suspicion" that a worker's use of drugs or alcohol is affecting job performance. They should be reminded that a test is an objective indicator of recent use and can rule it out. It's also a good idea to have sufficient checks and balances. When a supervisor recognizes the signs of drug or alcohol use because it's affecting job performance, someone at a higher level should review the information and observations before making the final decision to require a drug test.

7. There is a belief that drug testing doesn't really improve safety since it doesn't show actual impairment.

Drug testing is a good deterrent—most sensible people won't risk their jobs if they know they can be tested at any time. And money spent preventing an incident from ever occurring is typically 10 times less than associated costs surrounding a drug or alcohol incident, not to mention the emotional impact

an accident or injury—or worse—has on staff morale. Also, positive drug tests do show recent use and have become defacto evidence of impairment. Courts have upheld employer rights to take disciplinary action against em-

"... most sensible people won't risk their jobs if they know they can be tested at any time."

ployees who test positive—especially when safety is an issue. Drugs, whether illegal or prescription, are controlled precisely because of their effect on behavior and health. Furthermore, the nature of addiction creates safety concerns even when someone isn't currently "under the influence" because of the edginess associated with drug cravings. It's important to write drug-free workplace policies to prohibit workers from reporting to work with detectable levels of drugs in their system, not just "working under the influence."

8. There is a belief that there's no use testing since people can cheat the test.

Good labs can beat the cheaters by testing for adulteration, substitution, specific gravity and other common ways that signal someone is trying to beat the test. Do not use a lab that does not provide this "value-added" testing. Ask the

lab if it performs these tests. Then, ask for a letter stating that it performs these tests. Taking care to ensure the collection site is properly secured (e.g., bluing agent in toilet, water turned off) is another step. Observed collections are appropriate only when there is evidence of efforts to cheat.

9. Only illicit drugs are tested for, but there are known problems with alcohol and prescription drugs.

Only federal government-mandated programs are limited

to testing for certain drugs, namely the "5-panel" test (cocaine, amphetamines, opiates, marijuana and PCP). Because of its significant impact on safety, the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations also include alcohol.

Employers do have the right to know about the use of prescription drugs when it can impair performance and jeopardize safety, and many private-sector organizations do test for alcohol and prescription drugs. However, when this is the case, it is extremely important to ensure your drug-testing procedures include review by a Medical Review Officer (MRO) and allow workers the opportunity to provide a legitimate explanation for a positive test result, such as a physician's prescription. You must be very clear about the role of the MRO in reviewing such cases and what avenue he/she has for reporting concerns if he/she feels even legitimate use of a drug could impair a person's ability to work safely. In such cases, a change in duties or even a leave of absence might be appropriate. For additional tips, see the "client area" at www.AmericanDrugTesting.net or call 843-747-4111.



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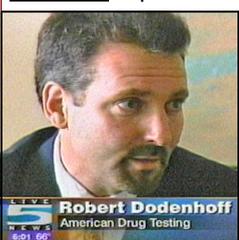
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