Substance Abuse and Safety



Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Substance abuse costs employers billions of dollars a year in accidents and injuries, lost productivity, and property and equipment damage. From a worker perspective, working with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol puts co-workers in danger and generally has a negative effect on their morale and job performance.

What's the Danger?

Addiction is the irresistible compulsion to use alcohol or drugs despite the negative consequences their use can cause. Substance abuse is the legal or illegal, recreational or addictive misuse of illegal drugs, over the counter or prescription drugs, or alcohol.

Abused substances always produce some form of intoxication that alters judgment, perception, attention, or physical control. This makes abusers dangerous in and out of the workplace. People who abuse drugs or alcohol are three and a half times more likely to be in a workplace accident compared to individuals who do not abuse drugs or alcohol. In a recent study, 47% of industrial injuries are directly related to alcohol abuse or alcoholism.

How to Protect Yourself

One of the best ways to protect yourself is to be aware of the signs and symptoms of addiction and substance abuse and report the behavior right away to a supervisor or someone in HR. Here are some warning signs and symptoms to be aware of.

- Weight loss.
- Sweating or chills.
- Slowed or slurred speech, impaired coordination, or slow reaction time.
- imited attention span, excessive talking and/or the inability to sit still.
- Irritability, aggressive, unpredictable or violent behavior.
- Poor motivation, frequent tardiness, taking more sick days, or lack of energy.

- Money problems, including asking co-workers for money, or stealing money.
- Carelessness, frequent mistakes, and risky behavior or lack of concern for others’ safety.

Final Word

It can be hard to report your co-worker or supervisor if you suspect substance abuse. But, their behavior could cause a fatal mistake—and you could be a victim.