Drugs and alcohol toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.21, 1926.900, 1926.901, 1910.109

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Would you want someone who is high, or still drunk from last night, running the machine next to you?

Why it matters

Alcohol and drugs slow your reactions, cloud your judgment and make you take chances you normally would not. Around heights, traffic, power tools or heavy equipment, that can get you or the people around you badly hurt. Impairment does not only come from illegal drugs: alcohol, some prescription medicines and even some over-the-counter medicines can do it too.

Key points

1. **What OSHA says about drugs and alcohol**
   OSHA has no general standard on drugs and alcohol at work, but a few rules name them directly. In construction, no one may handle or use explosives while under the influence of intoxicating liquors, narcotics or other dangerous drugs (29 CFR 1926.900(c)). The general duty to train still applies: in construction, the employer must instruct each employee in recognizing and avoiding unsafe conditions. Treat being impaired on the job as one of those unsafe conditions.
   29 CFR 1926.21(b)(2)

2. **Know your company's policy**
   Many companies have a written drug and alcohol policy, often called a drug-free workplace policy. It may cover testing, what counts as being under the influence, rules for prescription medicines and what happens if someone breaks the rules. Read it before you need it. If you have not seen it, ask your supervisor for a copy.

3. **Check your medicines**
   Some prescription and over-the-counter medicines cause drowsiness, dizziness or slow reactions. Read the label, and ask your doctor or pharmacist whether it is safe to drive, climb or run equipment while you take it. If a medicine could affect your work, follow your company's policy and tell your supervisor before you start a hazardous task. Never take someone else's prescription.

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4 Alcohol, hangovers and the morning after

Alcohol keeps affecting you until your body clears it, and that can take hours. Coffee, a cold shower or an energy drink will not sober you up; only time does. A hangover can also slow you down and break your focus, and being high at work is not safe even where marijuana is legal. Plan ahead the night before a workday, and do not drive to work if you could still be impaired.

5 Look out for each other

Warning signs can include the smell of alcohol, slurred speech, poor balance, glassy or red eyes, mood swings and careless mistakes. These signs can have other causes, like a medical problem, so do not try to diagnose or confront the person. If you safely can, keep them off equipment, ladders and the road, and tell your supervisor right away. If someone seems to be in a medical emergency or may have overdosed, call 911.

6 Get help early

If you or someone you know is struggling with alcohol or drugs, getting help early is a sign of strength, not weakness. Ask whether your company has an employee assistance program (EAP), which can offer confidential counseling. SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 is free and confidential, and it offers help in English and Spanish.

Scenario

Picture this: A worker shows up Monday morning after a late night. He says he feels fine, but he smells of alcohol and is slow to answer questions. The foreman has not noticed and assigns him to run the skid steer near a crew setting forms. Two coworkers notice but do not want to get him in trouble. What could happen next, and what should each person do?

Crew discussion

1. What does our company's drug and alcohol policy say, and where can you get a copy?
2. Which medicines could make it unsafe to drive, climb or run equipment, and who should you tell?
3. How would you tell a supervisor that a coworker seems impaired?
4. Where can someone on this crew get confidential help with alcohol or drugs?

Bottom line **Show up clear-headed, know how your medicines affect you, and speak up when you or a coworker is not fit for duty.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Drugs and alcohol at work / Drogas y alcohol en el trabajo

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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