



The Employer Connection

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The National Drug-Free Workplace Alliance
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Being Proactive – What Employers Can Do to Prevent Workplace Accidents

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Drug Free America Foundation
is a 501(c)(3) organization
committed to developing,
promoting and sustaining global
strategies, policies and laws
that will reduce illegal drug use,
drug addiction, drug-related
injury and death.

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From time to time employers ask what they can do to prevent workplace accidents. While there is no “one-size fits all” answer, there are a number of things that can be implemented to prepare for and respond to workplace accidents.

Is there a current drug free workplace policy in place?

If you did not update your drug free workplace policy in the past year, then it’s time to bring it current. In 2009, there was a change to the Florida statutes governing drug free workplace programs. While this change primarily affected employers’ administration of their program, it illustrates the need to be proactive. After your drug free workplace written policy is revised, it should be distributed to all employees. This is an excellent time for employers to educate their staff and reinforce the drug free workplace program.

Is there a focus on the health and safety of employees?

Implementing an overall safe and healthy workplace program which includes the drug free workplace program and an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides a significant return on investment. The small investment to genuinely promote health and safety can have a tremendous impact on employee morale which leads to improved productivity. (See “Health and Safety Program Suggestions” on Page Two)

Utilize written procedures for addressing employee behavior issues and accidents

Written procedures will provide guidance and expectations for your supervisors in how and when to handle adverse employee behavior.

Provide supervisory training to your front line managers

Empowering the supervisors who are “up close and personal” with employees on a daily basis is essential to carry out the policies and procedures of your company. Supervisory topics should be included as well as educating your front line managers on the signs and symptoms of substance abuse. However, these signs and symptoms observed on-the-job usually aren’t the first indicators that something is wrong. Procedures should be in place requiring

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supervisors to review protocol steps every time a property accident or human injury incident occurs. Documentation of verbal warnings as well as written warnings provides a “paper trail” if an employee’s behavior continues to spiral downward requiring more serious action. Annual training refreshers keep the knowledge current.

Drug test employees for property damage as well as human injury accidents

Often, employers overlook property damage as “the cost of doing business.” What if the damage is the result of an impaired employee? Identifying that risk early may well save untold future expense or liability. In addition, the cause of an accident may be attributable to another employee. Ensure you consider all parties involved for substance testing.

Utilize a random drug testing program as another measure of deterrence

Random testing programs have been proven “best practice” methods for deterring drug use on the job. Programs can usually be created at no cost by testing administrators, with the employer paying only the cost of the random tests. The suggested effective testing ratio is 25% of employees per year. Testing administrators employ “random number software” to impartially select candidates for drug testing while still providing a paper trail.

Checklists

See the next page for two sample checklists to utilize when there has been employee behavior concern or there has been an accident.

For more information...

For more information, or to receive assistance in updating your drug free workplace program, please contact Karen Belanger at (727) 471-0009 or kbelanger@dfaf.org.

Health and Safety Program Suggestions

- Invite wellness experts from your local clinic or hospital to screen employees for health related concerns (obesity, high blood pressure, cholesterol, etc.).
- Invite equipment manufacturers, safety specialists or insurance experts to provide safety updates for all employees.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles including diet and exercise.
- Provide smoking cessation benefits for those employees who smoke.
- Reward employees for reaching company or personal health and safety goals.
- Consult with wellness experts to provide additional workplace wellness suggestions.
- Provide an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefit to all employees.

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Reasonable Suspicion Checklist

- Ensure that supervisors are practicing good supervisory documentation with all workplace issues. Often, employees who are drug users or alcohol abusers will have documented adverse workplace behavior before the situation leads to making a reasonable suspicion drug or alcohol testing referral.
- If there is a suspicion of drug or alcohol use in the workplace, the employee's immediate supervisor and another manager or supervisor should independently complete the *Reasonable Suspicion Checklist* form (located in your original program materials). The checklist forms should be compared and a decision made as to whether or not to drug or alcohol test the employee.
- The supervisor should have the "*Custody and Control*" or lab form prepared ahead of time and must make appropriate arrangements to transport the employee to the laboratory collection site and then ensure the employee is safely transported home following the test. Never allow an employee to drive if you suspect the employee is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Ensure that the employee has photo identification.
- If the test results are positive, be sure to provide the employee with a list of treatment providers in your area. Per Florida statutes, you are required to notify the employee in writing of the positive results of the test. You are also required to notify the employee in writing as to the reasons he was asked to get a reasonable suspicion drug test.

Post-Accident Checklist

Post accident testing guidelines:

- When there is a death.
- When an employee receives a traffic citation.
- When an employee is involved in a vehicle accident requiring one or more vehicles to be towed from the scene.
- When there is bodily injury requiring notification of your workers' compensation insurance carrier.
- When an employee has caused significant equipment or property damage causing the company to notify its insurance carrier.
- When there is evidence suggesting that an employee contributed to an accident involving another employee.

If applicable, ensure that appropriate medical care is provided to the employee. If the employee is transported to the hospital or medical clinic, contact your drug testing administrator for further instructions.

Document all details about the accident as they become available to you. If the accident is on the premises of your company, obtain statements from witnesses or other employees if applicable.

Post accident drug testing should occur within 2 hours of the accident if possible, but otherwise within 32 hours. Post accident alcohol testing should be conducted within 2 hours, but not more than 8 hours post accident.

If a test cannot be conducted within the appropriate time frame, a supervisor should document the reason in the employee's personnel file and report this to management immediately.

As a condition of employment, employees are expected to submit to the testing. If they refuse, they are subject to termination.

Employees producing positive drug test results are subject to termination and non-coverage of health care expenses by Workers' Compensation.