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Your Safety Matters

This information letter is distributed to those people who are ensuring that their workplace is safe and healthy. This includes members of OHS Committees, OHS Representatives, Safety Officers, Supervisors, Managers and Directors. "Your Safety Matters" was formerly "Committee Member" - a free information letter which has been distributed since 1996.

Drugs and Risk Assessment

In carrying out a risk assessment on a hazard in your workplace you aim to consider everything that could influence whether or not someone could be injured or killed.

So how about employees or others in the workplace that use medical drugs, illegal drugs or alcohol? They could still walk, talk and work but because of their current or recent drug or alcohol usage their reactions and thinking are slower than usual and their actions become less coordinated. Also consistent drug or alcohol users can acquire a "drug personality", an uncaring, unfeeling attitude.



But is drug and alcohol usage significant enough to bother with in your risk assessment?

Here are the results of Australian surveys on this usage;

- ▶ **1 in 6** employees (17%) are using illegal drugs (mainly cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy, pain killers and cocaine).
- Flinders University Melbourne 2004.
- ▶ **1 in 50** drivers in Victoria tested positive for illegal drug use and **1 in 250** tested positive for alcohol use.
- Victorian Police Commissioner 2001, random roadside tests.
- ▶ **1 in 10** employees drink at short term risky or high risk levels and **4.5 in 10** employees drink at levels associated with risk of harm.
- Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2006.
- ▶ Any alcohol consumption **quadruples** the risk of injury for the first 6 hours after drinking alcohol, and then remains at **2.5** times that of a non-drinker.
- University of Queensland 2001

What do you think?

We recommend that in any risk assessment you consider a question such as;



What could happen if one of our employees doing this job, or someone else in the workplace, is affected by drug or alcohol use?



This publication provides general information about ohs. It is not a legal opinion and does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law to be applied to a particular problem.

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ABN 42164393628 ~ Fax : 02 9660 8757 ~ Email : train@courtenell.com.au ~ Website : www.courtenell.com.au
Phone : 02 9552 2380 (5 lines) ~ If you need any more information, you can contact us by phone, email or by fax anytime.