

# SAFETY OUTLOOK

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- **What is a drug free workplace?** A drug free workplace, as defined in the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, is a workplace in which “the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited.”
- **Why should you care about having a drug free workplace?** Because alcohol & substance abuse puts you at risk every day! A drug free workplace provides a safe environment for you & your co-workers to do their assigned duties. Being impaired by alcohol use or illegal substances drastically increases the chance of an accident or mishap that could injure you and/or another worker. In fact, research has shown that a worker who abuses drugs in the workplace is 3 ½ times more likely to have a workplace accident than one who does not participate in substance abuse. In addition to the safety benefits, it improves the morale of the team and productivity.
- **What are some physical signs of substance abuse?** Unstable Coordination, Lack of concentration, Incoherence, Drowsiness, Walking is inhibited, Intoxication, Changes in or unusual personal appearance, long coffee breaks, frequent trips to the water fountain or restroom, often late getting to work, may take extended breaks from lunch or breaks.

## Some common drugs and how to identify their users:

**Marijuana** is the illegal drug that is the cheapest, most plentiful, and easiest to obtain. Although marijuana has proven beneficial to some glaucoma and cancer patients, evidence shows that it can be addictive and has, at least, a sociological link to more potent drugs. Present day marijuana is 3 - 4 times more potent than 20 years ago. Marijuana acts on the brain and nervous system in about 15 minutes. The effects may last from two to four hours. The user may experience excitement at first and become quite talkative. The letdown after the euphoria can result in depression.

**Cocaine** use has become epidemic. Crack is easily available, has a low cost, and a powerful high. Cocaine is a stimulant. It is an odorless, white powder from the leaves of the coca bush. Most of the cocaine in the U.S. is smuggled in from Colombia. The most common way to use cocaine is to sniff the powder through the nose. The drug takes effect within minutes. The effect decreases over the next hour or two. Repeated use is necessary to maintain the high. Cocaine does not produce physical dependence, but psychological dependence is common. The cocaine user is anxious to avoid the post-high depression. The person may use cocaine almost continuously. Cocaine use on the job occurs fairly often because its effect is relatively short and it does not give off a tell-tale odor. The most common and noticeable sign is a nasal problem because when sniffed or snorted cocaine can cause a breakdown of the nasal membrane. Most experts agree that the most conclusive sign of cocaine use is an employee's erratic job performance. Cocaine's excessive use can produce hallucinations, frantic behavior, and irresponsible risk

## **Amphetamines and Methamphetamines**

An amphetamine is a synthetic stimulant first produced in 1887. It was at one time easy to obtain. Students used amphetamines to stay awake while cramming for exams, truck drivers used them on all-night hauls, and third shift workers used the pep pills to stay alert at work. The drugs were over prescribed in the 1960s causing the government to tighten controls on all facets of the manufacturing process, which drastically reduced the availability of amphetamines. Unfortunately, this action resulted in people building illegal labs to produce the drug. The labs, which can be located in apartments, cars, hotels, and homes, are a serious threat because "cooking" the drug produces noxious fumes and involves dangerous ingredients.

Amphetamine users will usually be hyped-up, talkative, and wild-eyed because the drug stimulates the central nervous system. Users can be irritable, paranoid, and can get violent. They also have a compulsion to repeat actions - walking fixed routes over and over or repeating an already completed task.

- **What should I do if I suspect there could be an instance of substance abuse?** The most effective thing is to quietly inform your immediate supervisor of the situation so that they can determine if there is sufficient evidence to investigate the suspicion further. YOU are a vital part of the team and we want all our workers to enjoy a safe working place. YOU can make a difference!

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