

SAFETY MEETING TOPIC: Alcohol on the Job

Working under the influence of alcohol is strictly prohibited. All companies forbid alcohol or drug use on any work site. This means more than just not drinking on the job. Tests have shown that alcohol and drugs can still have an effect on your body up to 18 hours after you have stopped drinking. Alcohol use is a legitimate on-the-job safety issue - and not just an attempt to control off-the-clock lifestyles.

Alcohol is a sedative. Drinking any quantity of alcohol impairs a person's judgment, thinking ability, and coordination to some degree. Poor concentration, carelessness, risk-taking behavior and errors in judgement can occur. Some people can "handle" alcohol better than others, but it is a fact that any alcohol consumed has some effect. Other factors which influence your body's ability to metabolize alcohol include your weight, medications, and previous medical conditions. You may not feel it right away, but remember, alcohol affects judgment. After drinking, you are no longer in a position to assess your own capabilities.

What should you do about a co-worker who is drinking on the job? Should you ignore the situation or report it? Most people would ignore the situation because they do not want to cause problems on the job or do not want to get involved. People would prefer to avoid conflict at almost any cost. But look at it this way -- the drinker, no matter how nice a co-worker, is not doing you any favors. It's a fact that the drinker is less productive and more likely to be absent from work. Who has to pick up the slack? You do. It is a fact that the drinker is more likely to be involved in a serious accident that may be fatal. Who else is he or she placing at risk? You!

Are you allowing the drinking to continue?

You are - if you cover for the drinker's poor productivity

You are - if you cover their mistakes.

You are - if you make excuses to others for them.

Additional risk factors:

A range of medications can affect work performance, particularly when mixed with alcohol. These include pain relievers, cough medicine, antihistamines and sleeping pills.

Talk to your supervisor. It is your responsibility to talk to your supervisor whenever any performance or safety issues affect your job. A drinking worker could be just as dangerous as defective rigging. You wouldn't hesitate to bring the rigging to your supervisor's attention, would you?

