

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

There are several steps you can take if you want to prevent your business becoming a 'safe haven' for drug users.

All workplaces must comply with the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992. This requires employers to take all practicable steps to identify and manage hazards in their workplaces. Under this Act, a hazard is defined as:

1. An activity, arrangement, circumstance, event, occurrence, phenomenon, process, situation, or substance (whether arising or caused within or outside a place of work) that is an actual or potential cause or source of harm; and
2. A situation where a person's behaviour may be an actual or potential cause or source of harm to the person or another person; and without limitation, a situation described in subparagraph (1) resulting from physical or mental fatigue, drugs, alcohol, traumatic shock, or another temporary condition that affects a person's behaviour.

The use of drugs and alcohol, even if consumed outside work hours, becomes an occupational health and safety issue if a worker's ability to exercise judgement, coordination, motor control, concentration and alertness at the workplace is impaired and leads to an increased risk of injury or incidents involving themselves or others.

“Many drug users are adept at hiding their drug habits”

All too often, small to medium sized businesses fail to implement a drug-free workplace policy and become the employer-of-choice for drug users wishing to evade detection. The reasons for this are many and varied but inevitably centre on the misconceptions that drug testing is 'too expensive' or 'not necessary because I know all of my workers'. However, many drug users are adept at hiding their drug habits and they easily sail through interviews and background checks.



Effective drug-free programmes are workplace specific and will vary according to the requirements of a particular business. However, they will all include at least two of the following basic components:

Detection – The location of illicit drugs in the workplace or the determination of recent drug use. These procedures are most commonly performed by drug detection dogs. A well-trained and validated detection dog can effectively screen all your staff for recent drug use and drug possession. These searches are non-intrusive, non-confrontational and require no participation on behalf of the employee (no loss of employee time). This method lends itself to businesses with large areas to search, particularly factories, warehouses and building sites.

Testing – This involves the detection of drug use by employees or job candidates. There are a variety of methods available for drug testing in the workplace, each having different drug detection times. In general, the detection time is longest in hair analysis (90 days or longer), followed by urine (1.5 hours to 7 days or longer), and saliva (oral fluid) (0.25 to 24 hours). Urine and oral fluid testing are required to be performed under Standards AS/NZS 4308:2008 and AS4760: 2006 respectively.

Urine is the most commonly used sample to determine drug use. It detects the use of a drug within the last weeks. However, a positive test does not necessarily mean that the individual was impaired at the time of testing. This has raised privacy issues, as the employer does not have the right to investigate non-work related activities.

New generation saliva (oral fluid) testing devices have recently become available in New Zealand. Saliva testing is a good way of detecting recent drug use and it is more likely to reflect current impairment than other workplace testing

(‘Drugfree Workplace’ continues on p 28...)

SAFETY FIRST

(*'Drugfree Workplace' continued from p 27...*)

methods. Saliva collection can also be performed under direct observation, reducing the risk of sample adulteration and substitution. For these reasons, this procedure is gaining popularity with employers as well as with the Employment Court, police and with the Unions.

Deterrent – A programme of scheduled drug detection or testing visits to your workplace will provide a strong deterrent to the use of drugs and it will discourage drug users viewing your business as a safe haven. The visit by drug detection dogs is a cost-effective way of reinforcing the Drug Free message in your workplace.

Education & Rehabilitation – Providing educational information to your staff allows them to make an informed decision on the consequences of drug use. A rehabilitation programme may include both education and counselling. These are particularly effective ways of increasing the likelihood that an employee will comply with the company's alcohol and drug policy.

There is simply no reason to put your company's hard earned reputation at risk of damage from employees using drugs and alcohol in your workplace. ■

Wayne puts a drug dog through its paces.



About the author: Wayne Severn is Operations Manager at ScentTECH Drug Detector Services Ltd, which works with small, medium and large businesses to provide high-quality drug and alcohol testing programmes using canine detection, urine testing and state-of-the-art oral fluid technologies.

For more information, contact Wayne: wayne@scenttech.co.nz, 021 808 962, or visit www.scenttech.co.nz.

Aerated wastewater treatment system

sealed treatment chambers

large capacity

local council approved

The AirTech™ Aerated Wastewater Treatment system makes it a breeze to turn household sewage and waste water into clean water for landscape irrigation. To find out more contact your local merchant or visit rxplastics.co.nz

available nationwide

AIRTECH™
Environmental Systems

RXP
RX PLASTICS