

# Substance Abuse Awareness

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Workplace overdose deaths have increased over 460% since 2011, with 411 fatalities in 2024 (BLS). Workers who report to work impaired are 3.6 times more likely to be involved in a workplace accident (OSHA). Construction has the second-highest rate of heavy alcohol use among all industries at 16.5%. Substance abuse puts everyone on site at risk — not just the impaired worker.

**411**

Workplace overdose deaths in 2024 (BLS)

**3.6x**

More likely to have an accident when impaired (OSHA)

**460%**

Increase in workplace overdose deaths since 2011

## 5 Rules for a Substance-Free Workplace

Every worker must follow these rules to keep the site safe:

- ZERO TOLERANCE ON SITE**  
No alcohol, illegal drugs or unauthorized substances — no exceptions, no excuses.
- REPORT IMPAIRMENT IMMEDIATELY**  
If a coworker appears impaired, report it — you may be saving their life and others'.
- KNOW YOUR MEDICATIONS**  
Prescription drugs can impair — inform your supervisor and read warning labels.
- USE AVAILABLE RESOURCES**  
Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are confidential. Asking for help is a sign of strength.
- NEVER COVER FOR SOMEONE**  
Covering for an impaired coworker puts everyone at risk — speak up, don't enable.

## Before You Start — Quick Checklist

- Are you fit for duty — free from impairment?
- Do you know the company substance abuse policy?
- Are prescription medications disclosed to your supervisor?
- Do you know how to access the EAP?
- Would you recognize signs of impairment in a coworker?
- Do you know the reporting procedure for impairment?

## Recognizing Signs of Impairment

**Physical Signs:** Bloodshot eyes, slurred speech, unsteady gait, tremors, unusual drowsiness or hyperactivity.

**Behavioral Signs:** Erratic behavior, poor judgment, mood swings, missed work, declining performance.

**Odor:** Smell of alcohol or marijuana on breath, clothing or personal items.

**Prescription Risks:** Opioids, sedatives and some antihistamines impair reaction time and judgment.

**Fatigue vs. Impairment:** Severe fatigue mimics impairment — both are dangerous. Neither should be ignored.

**Overdose Signs:** Unresponsiveness, shallow breathing, blue lips — call 911 and administer naloxone if available.

### Common Mistakes That Put Lives at Risk

- ✗ "I only had a couple beers last night" — alcohol impairment can last well into the next shift
- ✗ Hiding prescription drug side effects from your supervisor — impairment is impairment
- ✗ Covering for an impaired coworker — loyalty does not outweigh everyone's safety
- ✗ Ignoring signs because "it's not my business" — on a job site, everyone's safety IS your business

### Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Fit for duty means 100% alert — if you're not, speak up before someone gets hurt
- ✓ EAP is confidential — use it. Asking for help protects your career, not the opposite
- ✓ Report impairment the same way you report any safety hazard — it saves lives
- ✓ Keep naloxone on site and know how to use it — overdose response is a workplace skill

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Do you know how to access our Employee Assistance Program?
2. Have you ever worked alongside someone you suspected was impaired? What did you do?
3. Are there prescription medications that could affect your ability to work safely?
4. What is our company policy on substance abuse — and do we all know it?
5. Would you feel comfortable reporting impairment? Why or why not?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance sheet attached: [ ] Yes