

New York State Public Entities Safety Group 497

Safety Agenda

June 2005

Suggested Routing:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chair, Board of Comm.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chief Executive Officer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Works
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chief, Fire Department
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site Administrators
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commissioners
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
<input type="checkbox"/>	Elected Officials

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Striving for a Drug-Free Workplace

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), 73 percent of drug users are employed, costing American businesses and public employers billions of dollars annually in lost productivity and health care costs. The chances that your organization employs one of these 8.1 million workers is greater today than it has been in the past.

Nearly 10 percent of job applicants who take pre-employment surveys admit to “current” illegal drug use. Good reason for pre-employment drug testing. Nearly 5 percent of all prospective applicants test positive for illicit drugs in pre-employment screening. The difference is probably due to the fact that some drugs remain in the blood system longer than others. Drug users know the difference. (Most drugs remain in the system less than 72 hours, but marijuana lasts up to 30 days.)

Studies reveal that employees who abuse drugs have a tremendously harmful effect on the workplace – they are more likely to have extended absences from work, show up late, be involved in workplace accidents, and file workers’ compensation claims. Further, research shows that 10 to 20 percent of the nation’s workers who die on the job test positive for alcohol or other drugs.

Being proactive and implementing a substance abuse policy can save money, careers and families. Lax policies on drug and alcohol abuse can contribute to accidents if drugs or alcohol have been recently used, are currently being used or are nearby for immediate use. Adopting and enforcing an effective substance abuse policy can protect the lives of your workers and the lives of others.

A comprehensive approach includes five components – a policy, supervisor training, employee education, employee assistance, and drug testing. The program, especially the drug testing part, must be reasonable and take into consideration the privacy rights of the employee.

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Assistance in raising awareness about the impact of substance abuse in the workplace and implementing an effective program can be reached at DOL’s [Working Partners for an Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace](#). A particular focus of the program is placed on small businesses since they are less likely than larger organizations to have mechanisms in place to prevent workplace substance abuse. It should be helpful to the many smaller municipalities and fire districts that are members of Safety Group 497. See <http://www.osha.gov>.

The Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 requires contractors and grantees of Federal agencies to agree to provide drug-free workplaces as a precondition of receiving a contract or grant from a Federal Agency.

Tip: If you suspect a worker may be on drugs or alcohol at the time of an accident, ask the emergency medical provider to take a blood sample right away and preserve it for testing.

June 2005

June is National Safety Month

National Safety Month, sponsored by the National Safety Council (NSC), is a reminder to the leaders of all organizations to promote on and off-the-job safety and health throughout the year. Each year more than 20 million Americans suffer disabling injuries. Another 100,000 die from their injuries. Nearly two-thirds of those who die are workers or their family members. A wide range of safety and health educational resources that can be provided to employees and their families can be accessed at the NSC website <http://nsc.org>.

Eye Safety

An estimated 1,000 eye injuries happen in U.S. workplaces every day. Eye injuries are painful and can be very serious. They also incur medical cost, lost production, and workers' compensation claims.

Most eye injuries occur because the employee is either wearing the wrong eye protection or no eye protection at all. In order to reduce the chance of an eye injury in your organization, take the following steps:

1. **Conduct an eye injury safety audit.**

Inspect all work areas to identify operations and areas that have potential eye hazards. Identify chemical exposures, flying or falling particles, etc.

2. **Select the appropriate eyewear.**

Get advice on the many different kinds of eye glasses, goggles and face shields. Make sure the eyewear meets the exposure hazards and OSHA regulations as well as the employee's personal fit preferences.

3. **Educate Employees.**

Train all new employees on the need for personal protective equipment (PPE), including eyewear, and provide regular refresher training for all employees. Show them specifically where PPE is required and how you will enforce compliance with your directive.

4. **Clean and Maintain Eyewear.**

Require employees to clean their eyewear before working and after their breaks. Provide them with appropriate cleaning materials for the type of equipment they are using.

5. **Set the Example, Consistently.**

Make sure all members of the management team wear eye protection in all required locations at all times.

New DVD on Workplace Violence

The National Institute for Occupational Safety (NIOSH) has released a new training and educational DVD with recommendations and resources for preventing work-related homicides. Homicide in the workplace is the third leading cause of job-related fatalities, and the second leading cause of job-related fatalities in women. The DVD, Violence on the Job, discusses practical measures for identifying risk factors for violence at work, and taking strategic action to keep employees safe. It is based on extensive NIOSH research, as well as information from other authoritative sources. For NIOSH advice on preventing workplace violence, see www.cdc.gov/niosh/injury/traumaviolence.html