

## WORKPLACE ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING

Drug and Alcohol testing in the workplace is not an activity to be implemented without forethought and justification. Yes you are required to identify and control significant hazards and an employee or contractor being under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a significant hazard. Here are some steps you will need to take.

Where a company is carrying out '**safety critical work**' a zero tolerance for alcohol and drugs is warranted. Safety critical work means - work where the actions or inactions of a person may lead directly to an accident/incident affecting the safety of that person and other people, and includes the operation of machinery and mobile plant equipment.

**WARNING:** Current case law (court decisions) have determined that clear policy and procedure around alcohol and drug testing is required. Therefore to successfully implement a drug and alcohol testing policy you should seek specialist advice. We recommend you seek the assistance of a qualified professional.

There are many companies available which can assist you in developing and then conducting testing when required. A google search (workplace drug testing services) to locate a company in your area is recommended.

It is not simply a case of requesting a visit. There are steps you must follow to implement an alcohol and drug testing policy and procedure. This may take several days to set up. Once established where the Company has reasonable grounds for suspecting an employee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs while at work, the employer may require the employee to undergo a non-intrusive test (eg. urine test or breath test). This will be conducted by a qualified person. The testing process followed will be such as to ensure a safe and accurate test.

Therefore you must first have reasonable grounds for suspecting an employee is under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol at work. When assessing for just cause, there will usually be more than one indicator present. Indicators include but are not limited to the following:

- Excessive lateness
- Absences often on Monday, Friday, or in conjunction with holidays
- Increased health problems or complaints about health
- Emotional signs – outbursts, anger, aggression
- Changes in personality
- Changes in alertness – difficulty with attention span
- Changes in appearance – clothing, hair, personal hygiene
- Less energy
- Involvement in accidents
- Feigning sickness or emergencies to get out of work early
- Going to the bathroom more than normal
- Defensive when confronted about behaviour
- Dizziness
- Slurred speech
- Hangovers
- Violent behaviour
- Impaired motor skills
- Bloodshot eyes
- Impaired or reduced short term memory
- Reduced ability to perform tasks requiring concentration and coordination
- Intense anxiety or panic attacks
- Impairments in learning and memory, perception and judgement
- Irritability
- Depression
- Indicators identified and provided by a third party