Substance Abuse and Accidents for Trainers and Supervisors

Objective: Describe the effects of alcohol and drugs on workers and on safety.

**Trainer’s Note**

Drugs and alcohol cause many changes to the body and the mind. They can have a disastrous effect on safety. For this module:

- Review the effects of alcohol and other drugs.
- Discuss the case studies with workers using the Case Study Questions.
- Ask workers to share cases of alcohol and drugs they have seen on the job. Ask workers to discuss those cases using the Case Study Questions.
- Review the important points.
- Have workers take the True/False quiz to check their learning.

**Background**

Drugs and alcohol have many detrimental effects on the body. Those effects can be short-term or long-term. All those effects increase the possibility of accidents on the job.

**Alcohol**

Alcohol, a drug, depresses the central nervous system. With moderate drinking a person may experience:

- Dizziness
- Dulling of senses
- Impaired coordination
- Impaired reflexes
- Impaired memory
- Impaired judgment.

Consumed in large amounts or over a long period of time, alcohol may cause damage to the liver, heart, and pancreas. Heavy binge drinking can depress the parts of the brain that control breathing and heart rate; it can cause death.
Illegal Drugs

Illegal drugs include marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, speed (amphetamines), heroin, LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), PCP (phencyclidine), and many others. They can last for several months in the body. They can cause:

- Decreased long- and short-term memory
- Decreased concentration
- Distorted senses
- Impaired perception of time and space
- Slowed reaction time
- Temporary blindness
- Hallucinations.

Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs

Even legal, “safe” drugs can have harmful effects if used improperly. For example, prescription or over-the-counter drugs may cause drowsiness. They may have other harmful effects if:

- They are used in combination with another drug.
- They are used in the wrong dosage.
- Safety precautions are not followed.

Substance Abuse and Job Performance

- Alcohol can affect job performance for up to 14 hours.
- Combining alcohol and other drugs multiplies their effects. That increases the risk of injury and death.
- Drugs and alcohol increase the possibility of accidents.

Case Study 1

Joe drank beer and wine in high school and started using other drugs as a young adult. While working at Miller’s nursery, he started taking speed to get going in the morning. The drugs interfered with Joe’s judgment and caused a series of on-the-job injuries to him and others.

Case Study 2

Molly, a forklift operator, drank alcohol during her lunch hour. During a 16-hour shift, she drank on two more occasions and then went back to work. Molly knew she was high but felt that she could work. Before the shift ended, Molly struck a barrier with the forklift and was thrown from the vehicle. She lost work as a result of the injury.

Case Study Questions

- What was the immediate cause of the incident?
- What are the factors that led to the incident?
- How could similar incidents that could result in illness or injury be prevented?
- How could these situations be prevented?

Review These Important Points

- Alcohol is a drug.
- Even with moderate drinking a person experiences impairments.
- Drugs can last several months in the body.
• Working under the influence of drugs or alcohol can cause a serious accident.
• The effects of alcohol can last up to 14 hours.
• Using both alcohol and drugs increases the problem and can lead to a serious accident.
• If you have a problem, tell someone who can help.
• If a co-worker has a drug or alcohol problem, tell someone who can help.

About These Modules

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the U.S. Department of Labor.

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Substance Abuse and Accidents

Name ____________________________________________

True or False?

1. Drinking alcohol will affect job performance. T F
2. Job performance may be impaired up to 14 hours after drinking alcohol. T F
3. The combination of drugs and alcohol has little or no effect on working. T F
4. If a co-worker is affected by drugs or alcohol, it is not a problem. T F
5. With moderate drinking, a person may experience impairments in coordination, reflexes, judgment, and memory. T F