

# **9 - Identifying Substance Abuse: Safety Training**

EH&S – MGA

**Goals: This safety session should teach you to:**

- A. Understand the dangers of substance abuse at work.
- B. Recognize signs of substance abuse.

**OSHA Regulations: Drug-Free Workplace Act**

**1. Substance Abuse Violates Company Policy and May Violate the Law**

- A. Company rules ban drug or alcohol use at work, or working under their influence. It's illegal for anyone to possess or use drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.
  - o The Drug-Free Workplace Act also bans illegal drug use at firms with federal contracts.

**2. Drugs and Alcohol Create Major Health Hazards**

- A. Alcohol can damage the liver and heart. Abusers are often sick because they ignore good eating, sleeping, and other health habits. It's also addictive for some people.
- B. Cocaine is addictive, makes users so "up" they don't eat or sleep, and can cause respiratory and nasal damage, seizures, loss of brain function, and even death.
- C. Marijuana harms the lungs and possibly reproductive and brain functions.
- D. Heroin is highly addictive; users are prone to illness and malnutrition, with major risks of overdose and of HIV and hepatitis infection from dirty needles.
- E. Hallucinogens can cause depression and mental breakdown.
- F. Amphetamines are addictive and may cause brain damage.
- G. Inhalants can cause nerve, brain, stomach and liver damage; overdose is a risk.
- H. Sedatives are addictive, with long-term risk of liver or kidney damage. They have the potential for overdose and can be deadly if combined with alcohol.

**3. Drugs and Alcohol Are Major Safety Hazards to Users and to Others**

- A. They impair judgment, coordination, reaction, concentration, and perspective.
- B. No one should drive or operate equipment during or after drinking or using drugs.

**4. Learn to Recognize Signs of Possible Alcohol Abuse**

- A. Missing work or being late after drinking
- B. Poor concentration and coordination
- C. Being argumentative, anxious, defensive, and/or blaming others for problems
- D. Letting responsibilities slide

## 5. Learn to Recognize Signs of Possible Drug Abuse.

- A. Cocaine:
  - 1. Feeling almost superhuman, though judgment and decision-making are impaired
  - 2. Restlessness, poor concentration, paranoia, and big mood swings
- B. Marijuana:
  - 1. Physical and mental slowdown, forgetfulness, inability to judge space or distance
  - 2. Feeling that work and other responsibilities aren't important
- C. Heroin:
  - 1. Slow, fuzzy actions and reactions
  - 2. Loss of interest in anything but drugs, and sometimes stealing to pay for them
- D. Hallucinogens (PCP, Ecstasy, angel dust, etc.):
  - 1. Seeing or hearing things that aren't there; inability to recognize danger
  - 2. Bizarre, sometimes violent, reactions and behavior
  - 3. Panic from flashbacks of past drug experiences
- E. Amphetamines (speed, meth, etc.):
  - 1. "Hyper" behavior, fast, constant talking, nervousness, and mood swings
  - 2. Pushing beyond physical capacity and carelessness
- F. Sedatives (downers, including codeine cough medicine):
  - 1. Slow mental and physical reflexes
  - 2. Difficulty doing precise work
- G. Inhalants (nitrous oxide, airplane glue, amyl nitrate, etc.):
  - 1. Slow mental and physical reflexes and dizziness
  - 2. Reckless or violent behavior

## 6. Don't Ignore Signs of Substance Abuse

- A. If you feel you may have a substance abuse problem:
  - 1. Remove yourself from situations where you could put anyone in danger
  - 2. Get help from the employee assistance program, AA, etc.
- B. If you feel a co-worker may have a substance abuse problem:
  - 1. Discuss your reasons for concern with the person and urge him or her to get help.
  - 2. If you continue to see signs of possible substance abuse, tell your supervisor.

## **Summation: Substance Abuse Puts the User and Others in Danger**

People use alcohol and drugs to feel better or cope with problems. But substance abuse solves nothing and creates major new problems, including safety risks.