

**DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE DISORDERS**  
**IN FOOD PROCESSING AND HANDLING**  
**ENVIRONMENTS... FOR MANAGERS**  
**AND SUPERVISORS**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

- **Substance use disorders are a worldwide problem.**
  - In the United States alone there are roughly 60 million binge drinkers, and almost 40 million drug users.
  - 60% of the people who are battling drug or alcohol use disorders have jobs.
  
- **Food processing and handling workers put in long hours, often on their feet all day.**
  - They can also experience pain from overexertion as well as making repetitive motions for prolonged periods of time.
  - And any of these things might cause them to rely on drugs or alcohol to combat the pain.
  
- **An employee with an alcohol or drug problem can...**
  - Decrease productivity.
  - Create a hostile work environment.
  - Damage your company's good name.
  - Undermine your efforts to make your company a safer place for everyone to work.
  
- **Food processing and handling work requires precision and a clear mind.**
  - If your workers are "under the influence," they won't be able to safely operate machinery.
  - And they could contaminate your product if they don't follow proper procedures.
  
- **Substance use disorders in the workplace account for...**
  - 65% of on-the-job accidents.
  - 50% of workers' compensation claims.

- **As a result, substance use disorders cost American companies more than \$80 billion every year through...**
  - Decreased productivity.
  - Absenteeism.
  - Turnover.
  - Healthcare costs.
  - Workplace accidents.
  - Workers' compensation.
- **If an employee with a substance use disorder makes a mistake or causes an accident on the job, their coworkers may have to pay as well... sometimes with their lives.**
- **An accident can also result in lawsuits that can directly jeopardize your own career and financial well-being.**
  - The family and friends of an employee with a substance use disorder can pay a heavy emotional price too.
- **So to keep everyone safe, you need to be able to recognize and control drug and alcohol use in your workplace before accidents or injuries occur.**
- **Unless you are looking for them, you might not see the drugs and alcohol that are in your facility at all.**
  - So it pays to know what "substances" people are likely to use on the job.
- **The most commonly misused substance, both on and off the job, is alcohol.**
  - It's a "legal intoxicant", so it's easily available.
- **Workers who are drinking can be very clever in hiding it. They may...**
  - Carry a flask.
  - Stash a bottle in their locker.
  - Spike the coffee they bring to work in their thermos.
  - Mix alcohol with soda, juice or other beverages.
- **The next most popular substance used in the workplace is marijuana.**
  - While at one time pot was illegal throughout the country, it has now been legalized in a number of states for both recreational and medical use.

- **But changes in marijuana's legal status do not change its effects on the user, or on workplace safety.**
  - Pot is usually smoked in either small pipes or rolled into “joints,” which you may see in the work area of someone with a substance use disorder.
- **In food processing and handling work, injuries can unfortunately be the “norm”.**
  - And whether it’s a broken bone from a slip or fall, or a musculoskeletal disorder from overexertion, doctors will often prescribe an opioid pain medication.
  - But taking opioids to treat pain can quickly lead to misuse and addiction.
- **Tranquilizers, codeine, OxyContin and other prescription drugs are all substances that are often misused.**
  - Many of these medications are chemically similar to heroin and other narcotics.
  - This makes them just as addictive and deadly as illegal drugs.
- **A drug that is also commonly misused is the painkiller fentanyl, a powerful, lab-made opioid.**
  - Fentanyl can be consumed knowingly or unknowingly.
  - It can be 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine.
  - So a lethal dose can be very small.
- **Some workers misuse solvents, gasoline, glue and other chemicals that they work with by purposely inhaling the fumes.**
  - So you should talk to any employee who appears to be breathing or “huffing” these materials.
- **Remember, it’s your responsibility to ensure that everyone who uses these types of substances in their job wears the proper respiratory protection.**
- **To make sure that employees are drug-free and sober, you need to understand the laws that focus specifically on substance use disorders in the workplace.**
  - These regulations are designed to protect employees’ health and safety.
  - They affect people who have substance use disorders, while at the same time safeguarding their privacy and civil rights.
- **OSHA’s “General Duty Clause” requires employers “to provide working conditions which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm”.**

- **Since substance use disorders are considered a “recognized” hazard you must ensure that an employee who appears to be using drugs or alcohol does not pose a danger to themselves or others.**
- **Typically, private employers aren’t required by law to give their employees drug tests.**
  - But there are exceptions for federal contractors as well as safety-sensitive positions.
- **Even if there is no law enforcing drug testing in your facility, it can be a good idea to test periodically anyway.**
  - This can help you recognize potential problems as early as possible.
- **Companies have to adhere to the Department of Transportation’s “Procedures for Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Programs” when they employ...**
  - Truck drivers.
  - Dispatchers.
  - Mechanics who have “safety-sensitive” jobs.
- **This regulation requires that employees in these types of positions be given random alcohol and drug tests.**
  - It also states that if there is a “reasonable suspicion” that they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they must be immediately removed from their “safety-sensitive” tasks and be given a substance use test.
- **At the same time, since substance use disorders are considered illnesses, you must be careful that you don’t violate an employee’s privacy or other civil rights.**
  - For instance, medical privacy laws can often prevent you from questioning a worker on their medication use.
- **However, you can insist that an employee tell you if they are taking medications that could cause “drowsiness” or impairment if they...**
  - Drive company vehicles.
  - Operate machinery.
  - Perform tasks that require them to be completely alert.
- **If your company employs 15 or more people you must also comply with the “Americans with Disabilities Act.”**
  - This says that you may not “discriminate” against a worker who is trying to overcome a substance use disorder.

- **You also may not discharge or otherwise punish a person with a substance use disorder without giving them a chance to overcome their problem by entering a substance use disorder treatment program.**
  - So it’s important for you to keep these “employee rights” in mind when you are dealing with substance use disorder issues.
  
- **To help prevent employee substance use disorders, a company needs to create a work environment that encourages sobriety.**
  - That’s why all companies, regardless of their size, should have a written “Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace” policy in place.
  
- **The policy should clearly state what behaviors are prohibited, such as...**
  - Consuming alcohol immediately prior to or during the workday.
  - Possessing, selling, distributing or using illegal drugs.
  - Operating machinery or motor vehicles while using medications that cause drowsiness or other impairment.
  
- **It should also require that regular education sessions be held for employees, managers and supervisors.**
  - So everyone can better understand substance use disorders and know what they can do to help prevent them.
  
- **The policy should be tailored to “fit” your company’s specific needs as well as the type of work that your employees perform.**
  - For instance, your drug and alcohol policy should spell out that workers should not operate food processing machinery if they have been drinking or using drugs of any kind.
  
- **Substance use disorder policies should also specify what happens if a person breaks the rules. Consequences typically include...**
  - Suspension from “safety-sensitive” duties.
  - Mandatory participation in a substance use disorder rehabilitation program.
  - Termination for serious offenses.
  
- **The policy should also explain the steps that should be followed when a worker is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.**
  - For example, your company may conduct various forms of drug and alcohol testing to identify employees with substance use disorders.

- **Many companies also provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).**
  - These help workers and their families deal with substance use disorders and their related issues.
  
- **It's important that everyone who works in your facility be aware of all of this.**
  - So make sure all your people, including temporary employees and contract workers, have a copy of the company's drug and alcohol policy.
  - And provide one to all new hires as well.
  
- **Opioid and prescription pain medication misuse are common concerns in food processing and handling environments.**
  - So you might also take a look at what you could do to control their use through the healthcare benefits programs your company offers.
  
- **You can limit coverage of opioid prescriptions to seven days.**
  - Or work with your pharmacy benefits management company to otherwise manage the use of prescription pain medications.
  - If you decide to do this, make sure that all of your employees are aware of the policy and its purpose... to protect them and others in your facility.
  
- **Every company should provide regular training sessions on the subject of substance use disorders.**
  - This helps employees understand how disorders can occur and the hazards that come with them.
  
- **Topics should include...**
  - The types of substances that can often become addictive.
  - The effects of drugs and alcohol on work performance, safety, health and personal life.
  - The signs of drug and alcohol use disorders.
  - How to report substance use disorders in the workplace.
  - The resources that are available to help employees overcome drug and alcohol use disorders.
  - A review of the company's drug and alcohol policy.
  
- **If the policy also includes provisions for drug and alcohol testing, be prepared for some push-back from employees.**
  - Many people feel that testing questions their character.
  - Others believe it's a violation of their privacy.

- **Your best approach is to ensure that everyone understands...**
  - Why testing is a part of the company’s drug and alcohol policy.
  - That the goal is to keep all employees safe, healthy and productive on the job.
  
- **Substance use disorder tests are usually given in five types of situations...**
  - “Pre-employment” tests are used to screen out illegal drug users before they’re hired.
  - “Reasonable suspicion” tests are given when there are indications that a worker is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
  - “Post-accident” tests are used to determine if substance use contributed to an accident that occurred in the workplace.
  - “Return-to-duty” tests verify that workers who have been removed from “safety sensitive jobs” due to substance use can safely resume their normal job functions.
  - “Random” tests, which are given without notice and by “luck of the draw,” ensure that employees are not violating the company’s drug and alcohol policy.
  
- **Urinalysis is a common form of pre-employment and random drug and alcohol testing.**
  - “Oral fluid” testing is also approved for use by the Department of Transportation (DOT) and for all federal employees and companies with federal contracts.
  
- **Oral fluid testing offers a variety of advantages for employees and employers alike. These tests...**
  - Take less time.
  - Are less likely to be tampered with. Eliminate the need for private restrooms and same-gender collection arrangements.
  
- **A company can also perform periodic alcohol and drug tests to uncover substance use that might otherwise go unnoticed.**
  
- **And government regulations require random substance use tests for...**
  - Truck drivers.
  - Pilots.
  - Other transportation industry employees who have “safety-sensitive” jobs.

- **You should be aware that OSHA does not allow a company to conduct drug tests on employees as a form of retaliation when they have brought unsafe work conditions to the attention of their company or OSHA.**
- **OSHA has also stated that employers' policies should limit post-incident testing to situations in which...**
  - Employee substance use is likely to have contributed to the incident.
  - The test can accurately identify the impairment caused by drug use.
- **Drug and alcohol testing can make employees think twice about using drugs or alcohol on the job.**
  - But testing is not infallible.
- **There are many types of drugs, and no more than a few can be tested for at one time.**
  - Alcohol and some other drugs can only be detected for a few hours after they are used.
- **Employees with a substance use disorder have also been known to switch out their urine sample with someone else's that doesn't contain drugs or alcohol.**
  - So it can sometimes be a challenge to determine if an employee is really "under the influence".
  - But if you suspect someone is, you have to try.
  - People's health and well-being depend on it.
- **How do you spot employees with a substance use disorder?**
  - Don't expect them to make it easy for you.
  - Most of the time they'll do their best to hide their behavior from you.
  - But one reasonably effective way to detect a substance use disorder is to look for anything "unusual" in how a person behaves.
- **How they act will depend on what they're "using".**
  - Depressants, such as alcohol, marijuana and tranquilizers, slow down brain activity... making a person sluggish.
  - Stimulants, including cocaine, crack and methamphetamine cause a person to become abnormally active.
  - Narcotic analgesics or "painkillers" such as OxyContin, heroin, morphine and fentanyl numb the user and make them more relaxed.

- **Drug use can also result in extreme mood swings.**
  - For instance, someone who is high on cocaine may be giddy, energetic and extroverted.
  - But as the drug wears off, they can rapidly become angry, depressed and withdrawn.
- **How much of a substance a person has "used" will also influence how they behave.**
  - For instance, a single glass of wine tends to relax most people and make them more "sociable."
- **But everyone reacts differently when they drink too much.**
  - Some people fall asleep.
  - Others become the "life of the party."
  - Some may get anxious, depressed, angry... even violent.
- **If you do notice a worker behaving oddly, you can start looking for more "concrete" signs of a substance use disorder.**
  - One way to do this is to look at their job performance.
  - Employees with substance use disorders usually have a lot of difficulty functioning efficiently on the job.
- **You should be keeping written performance reports and safety records for all of your employees.**
  - These reports can help you to deal with everyone's performance or safety issues, regardless of the cause.
  - But they can also reveal patterns in an employee's behavior that may indicate a substance use disorder.
- **Remember, since these notes can affect an employee's livelihood and may be reviewed by others, you should always stick to facts.**
- **If you smell alcohol on their breath, for example, record what you observed along with the date and the time.**
  - But don't write down that they were "drunk."
  - That may be what you think, but it's not something you know.
- **When these "incident reports" establish a pattern of questionable job performance, you have a solid basis for raising the issue of "working under the influence" with the worker.**

- **As a manager you are representing your company.**
  - So it's important how you proceed when an employee appears to have a substance use disorder.
  - While you definitely have a responsibility to maintain a safe and productive workplace, you must also respect the rights and the privacy of the employee.
  
- **It's always a good idea to consult your company's drug and alcohol policy to refresh your memory of what you're supposed to do.**
  - Trying to "wing it" can cause you, and your company, a lot of grief.
  
- **Never accuse the employee of having a substance use disorder! It's not your job to...**
  - Be a police officer.
  - Diagnose a worker's substance use disorder.
  - Function as their therapist.
  
- **How the situation should be managed will depend on several things.**
  - The employee's apparent level of impairment.
  - Their job functions.
  - The potential for them to have an accident.
  
- **In most cases a company drug and alcohol policy will direct you to report problems to...**
  - Someone in Human Resources.
  - A manager or supervisor who has received in-depth training on the subject.
  
- **But any time an impaired employee's actions could endanger themselves or others, you should intervene immediately.**
  - For example, workers who drive vehicles or operate machinery should never be permitted to perform these tasks if they appear to be "under the influence."
  
- **If it is determined that a worker does have a substance use disorder, they will usually be required to enter a rehabilitation program.**
  - This may be done through the company's EAP (if one exists) or with an outside group.

**\* \* \* SUMMARY \* \* \***

- **In your efforts to create a drug and alcohol-free workplace, it's important for you to respect the rights and privacy concerns of your workers.**
- **All employees should have a copy of your company's drug and alcohol policy.**
- **Everyone in your facility should be provided with training on substance use disorder prevention, including temporary employees and contract workers.**
- **You need to be able to recognize the "signs" of drug and alcohol use yourself.**
- **If you suspect that a worker may have a substance use disorder, your company's drug and alcohol policy can provide guidance in how you should proceed.**
- **Any time an employee's actions could create a dangerous situation, you must intervene immediately.**
- **Now that you know the signs of substance use disorders and understand what you can do to help prevent them, you can help make your company a safer and more productive place to work... for everyone, every day!**