



Occupational Health Services
of America, Inc.



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The Number One Drug Is Legal!

Most of you are drug testing but what about alcohol testing? American employers can expect 3.5 employees with an alcohol problem for every 1 with a drug problem. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) June 2007 Study *Worker Substance Use and Workplace Policies and Programs*, 2.6 percent of fulltime workers aged 18 to 64 admitted to past year illicit drug dependence or abuse. This compares to 9.2 percent admitting to past year alcohol dependence or abuse.

How do these statistics affect you, the employer? Workers with alcohol addiction cost U.S. businesses nearly \$134 billion a year in sick leave, on-the-job accidents, and frequent workers' compensation claims according a February 2, 2007 article in *U.S. News and World Report*. You may argue that the social drinker is not the cost, only the heavy "full-time" user. New research shows that it is the light or light-to-moderate drinkers who cause the most problems. More than half of all alcohol related problems in the workplace are caused by light drinkers, and that number increases to 87% when you add in light-to-moderate drinkers. Most of the problems arise from hangovers. But, 7 percent of workers admitted to drinking during the workday, a beer at lunch or a glass of wine.

The fact that alcohol use is legal is one reason some are reluctant to test for alcohol. It is socially acceptable. Many company functions serve alcoholic beverages. Where do you draw the line? The line is drawn when the employee crosses over the line on your property as employer, bringing the effects of the substance to the workplace. Your policy should include reasonable suspicion and post-accident alcohol testing. You, as an employer can put some teeth into your program by adding random alcohol testing. When workers with an alcohol abuse problem know they are subject to an unannounced random test, they are much more likely to abstain from using on the job or coming to work under the influence.

For more information about alcohol testing, please contact our office at **205-421-2085**, or toll-free **800-367-6472**. You may email us at: info@occhealthsvcs.com.

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