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HOW TO MANAGE ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS (AOD) IN THE WORKPLACE

This factsheet provides information to support small-medium sized construction organisations in Canterbury to manage the impacts of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) in the workplace. It includes a checklist to help you develop an AOD policy and links to resources.

AOD IN THE WORKPLACE

Includes:

- Excessive alcohol intake onsite or turning up hungover.
- Recreational drug use, onsite or out of work hours.

How is the workplace affected by AOD?

Problem drinking and drug taking at work covers any instance that impacts negatively on the workplace, even if it happens outside work hours and away from work. For example if a person turns up to work after an evening of heavy drinking and is unable to function properly, or cannot work to their best ability.

The impacts of alcohol and drugs in the workplace include:

- accidents and injuries
- fatalities
- impaired performance and productivity
- poor work relations/morale
- lateness or absenteeism
- decreased performance often referred to as "presenteeism"
- higher employee turnover
- putting the company reputation/competitive strength at risk.

An effective drug and alcohol policy

The best way to ensure staff understand the organisation's expectations towards AOD is to develop and implement an effective AOD policy. **This does not mean simply stopping work, banning alcohol from the workplace, or suggesting staff abstain in their lives beyond work.** It's about supporting the prevention of harm in the workplace with a focus on education, training and where it's needed, rehabilitation.

We have set out a simple procedure to help you develop and implement an effective AOD policy. Organisations should also seek appropriate advice as required when implementing a policy into their business.

There are significant resources available to help you develop your AOD policy. These are available on our website: www.safetycharter.org.nz

Developing an AOD policy

a. Planning and consultation

Before you start:

- Consider why you need an AOD policy and the risks and consequences of not having one.
- Consult with employees and contractors and plan your approach. It is important to involve workers from all levels of the business and to get buy-in. This will assist in ensuring there is a positive safety culture and that the policy and procedures will be effective.
- Consult with your Union as applicable.
- Consider legal requirements.

b. Setting the standard

Your policy needs to clearly establish how the organisation will respond to staff impairment. It should include:

- The organisation's response if someone either shows signs of being affected by AOD, is convicted of a drugs or alcohol offence, or has recently been involved in any workplace accident or near miss. Sometimes signs of drug and alcohol misuse are signs of general fatigue. If you accept that fatigue is the cause of poor performance and testing isn't appropriate, it's still important to stand down the worker from safety sensitive tasks.
- What action you will take immediately e.g. standing a worker down if you suspect they are impaired.
- The organisation's response if someone refuses an AOD test.
- What action/s you'll take if you receive a positive test result e.g. a review of whether the worker should perform a safety sensitive role or disciplinary action.
- What long term actions you'll take, including support for an affected worker, such as education, rehabilitation and disciplinary action.

The policy should outline how the organisation will be a responsible host – e.g. limit the amount of alcohol at work functions, provide non-alcoholic drinks and provide transport home.

c. Training and Education

Making sure staff understand why the policy is needed, and actually read the policy will be key to its success.

The policy needs to outline:

- How you will communicate the policy to all staff, and ensure they understand the consequences of impairment on site through AOD.
- The roles and responsibilities of managers, supervisors and other staff, and the training they require to carry out those roles, if any.
- The education and rehabilitation procedures for any staff with AOD related issues.
- Where staff can go to get help with any issues they may have with AOD.

d. Testing

If you decide to put in place a testing system for AOD, your policy should outline why and when you will test and include information on:

- Whether or not the organisation will do reasonable cause, post-incident and random testing.
- What each test type will cover i.e. alcohol and the types of drugs covered.
- How to test – the initial test for alcohol impairment is breath-testing and for drug misuse is urine testing. There are standards to comply with and typically most organisations use an external agency.
- What to do if the result is positive – you must give the worker the opportunity to explain before deciding on appropriate action.
- Outline whether the organisation will undertake pre-employment testing. Doing this sends a clear signal that you are serious about managing the risks of AOD right from the start of employment.

Ensure any testing that could be done under the policy is covered in employment agreements or contracts. This will clarify that workers and contractors are consenting to drug and alcohol testing in those specific circumstances.

e. Monitoring

You need to indicate how you'll monitor the risk of AOD onsite. If you suspect a worker is affected, attempt to resolve the issue by talking about the problem. Record any monitoring completed e.g. notes from meetings, notes from field monitoring of workers or testing records. If the issue can't be resolved you can seek assistance from Mediation Services.

Monitor the effectiveness of the policy – set up a procedure so that you can check if the policy is current and working. You could annually review incidents that have occurred with managers and designated staff. Update the policy as required.

Checklist to develop and implement an AOD policy

No.	Topic	Done
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a. Planning and Consultation

1.	Understand your risks and why you need an AOD policy	
2.	Consulting with employees/contractors	
3.	Planning your approach	
4.	Consider legal requirements	

b. Setting the Standard

5.	How to respond to staff using AOD	
6.	How to respond to other workers on site using AOD	
7.	Being a responsible host	

c. Training and Education

8.	How staff will know about the policy and understand why it's needed	
9.	Training managers, supervisors and other key staff	
10.	Education, disciplinary action and rehabilitation procedures	
11.	Providing information to help those who need help around AOD	

d. Testing

12.	AOD testing procedures	
13.	Consider implementing pre-employment drug testing	
14.	Worker/Contractor contract or agreement to include AOD testing clause	

e. Monitoring

15.	Monitoring the risk	
16.	Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and procedures	

We have developed a comprehensive list of resources on AOD in the workplace on the Safety Charter's website. These can be found at: www.safetycharter.org.nz. This includes:

- Resources to help you develop your policy further
- Assistance for those affected by AOD
- Developing and implementing drug testing procedures
- Information on how AOD affects workers health.

For anyone who may have a problem with AOD, the Alcohol and Drug General Helpline can be reached on freephone: 0800 787 797 or www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz