DECEMBER
SAFETY TALK

WORKPLACE SUBSTANCE MANAGEMENT

There is no “safe” level of impairment in the workplace, regardless of the cause of that impairment.

Someone who is impaired can have difficulty doing their work safely, and place themselves and others at risk of workplace injury or death.

There are many potential causes of impairment, including fatigue and certain medical conditions, as well as the use of legal and illegal substances such as alcohol, cannabis, street drugs and some prescribed or over the counter medications.

All workplaces should have a policy on workplace substance management. The purpose of this policy would be to ensure a safe workplace, and to provide employees with a substance use problem the opportunity to get well. Workplace substance management policies should not focus on punishing a worker who has a substance use problem; rather, they should help ensure a safe workplace while helping the employee recover.

Components of the Policy would include the intent of the Policy, responsibilities of the employer, supervisors and workers, and procedures, should substance use in the workplace be an issue.

In compliance with WorkSafeBC OH&S Regulations 4.19 and 4.20, employees of the organization are responsible for:

- Reporting fit for work and remaining fit for work while on municipal business
- Informing their supervisor immediately if they are unable to safely and efficiently perform their duties
- Abstaining from any substance prior to or during a scheduled work shift that could impair their ability to safely perform their duties
- Assuming responsibility for their substance dependency and seeking professional assistance

Under the same Regulations, the employer must not knowingly permit a person to remain at any workplace while the person's ability to work is affected by alcohol, a drug or other substance so as to endanger the person or anyone else.

The workplace substance management policy should detail procedures to follow if someone is believed to be impaired in the workplace, with the purposes being to maintain a safe workplace, and ensure help and support are available for those with substance use disorders.

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