

## OSH – DRUGS & ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

**It can be difficult to know how to handle situations where drugs and alcohol may be involved – here a few brief tips and further information can be found at Worksafe <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe>**

### **Why should there be a policy on drugs and alcohol in the workplace?**

There are a number of reasons why it may be appropriate to develop a workplace policy on alcohol and other drugs:

- An employer could be found in breach of the general duty to provide a safe workplace that is free from hazards if injury or harm is suffered as a result of alcohol or other drug use.
- Having an alcohol and other drug policy demonstrates management commitment to a safe and healthy workplace.
- Having a clearly defined policy with supporting procedures in place will assist the employer to provide a safe workplace and manage drug and alcohol related issues in the workplace.
- The existence of a policy also provides a means of informing employees and other people at the workplace about what behaviour is acceptable in relation to alcohol and other drugs.
- If a person appears affected or impaired by alcohol or drugs, the employer has an obligation to make sure the person or anyone else at the workplace is not put at risk.

### **What action can an employer take if they think a worker is impaired by drugs or alcohol?**

If a person appears affected or impaired by alcohol or drugs, the employer has an obligation to make sure the person or any one else at the workplace is not put at risk.

If a policy exists for this situation, it should be followed. In the absence of a policy, the employer should determine the most appropriate course of action, which may include making arrangements for the person to get home safely.

It should not be assumed that any observed impairment is caused by alcohol and/or other drug use. Other impairment factors may include fatigue, medical conditions, chemicals, heat, noise and symptoms of work-related stress.

### **How should an employer approach someone affected by drugs or alcohol in the workplace?**

- If a policy exists for this situation, it should be followed. In the absence of a policy, the employer should determine the most appropriate course of action, which may include making arrangements for the person to get home safely.
- It should not be assumed that any observed impairment is caused by alcohol and/or other drug use. Other impairment factors may include fatigue, medical conditions, chemicals, heat, noise and symptoms of work-related stress.

Impairment can be caused by a range of factors, including alcohol and other drug use. The focus at the workplace should be on occupational safety and health management rather than more general concerns about personal health.

Where the ability to work safely is impaired, the employer and workers should respond in a humane manner based on the information available.

- Be brief, firm and calm.
- Use the affected person's name; repeat your message ('I am instructing you to stop work for the day. Arrangements will be made for you to go home').
- Do not argue or debate; simply repeat your message.
- Avoid using terms such as 'You're drunk'.