

Safety Alert 24-38 Drugs and Alcohol Testing

Incident Summary

There has been a recent incident on one of our schemes regarding operatives turning up to site unfit for work.

Three operatives working for a subcontractor were asked to undertake a drugs & alcohol test after suspicion arose around their demeanour on site. The first suspicion was due to a report from another operative who claimed to have detected the smell of



alcohol on one operative. Additionally, two more members of the team exhibited signs of reduced motivation and constricted pupils. Despite the site manager assigning tasks to them, they claimed to be unaware of their responsibilities, despite having been briefed on the (SSOW) and the tasks during the site daily briefings. The site manager discussed his concerns with the site supervisor, and they confirmed having similar suspicions of their intoxication.

Consequently, around 12 noon, the site manager raised these concerns with the SHEQ team and arranged for the operatives to undergo 'with cause' drug and alcohol testing.

The test results revealed that two from the three operatives failed the D&A test, with the third refusing the test.

Immediate Action Taken

- The three operatives were stood down and asked to wait in the site canteen awaiting the 'with cause' D&A test to be undertaken.
- The test results revealed that the first operative had failed the alcohol test, with a reading twice the legal limit. As a result, they were prohibited from driving and they were collected from site, with their car being collected separately.
- The second operative was found to have cannabis, opiates, and tramadol in their system.
- After the results, their employer was notified as well as the SHEQ team. All three were red carded and dismissed from working on the site.

Further Information and Next Steps

The site team and subcontractor deserve immense credit for potentially averting serious injuries to the working party or others working on the site. The incident was dealt with in a professional and prompt manner.

Short-term effects of Alcohol and Drugs

The short-term effects of alcohol or drugs can be dangerous to yourself and others. They include:

- Reduced co-ordination by reducing your brain’s ability to control your movements (e.g. of your eyes, hands, and feet) and your perceptions.
- Reduced Reaction speed and ability to recognise and react to danger.
- Reduced ability to judge distances
- Negative impacts on short term memory.
- Reduced decision-making ability

These issues could potentially escalate, heightening the level of danger for both you and those around you.

Always remember to look after your mates, anyone turning up for work in an unfit condition could cause themselves injury or something even worse.

Drugs and Alcohol Testing

MWHT has random drug testing in place, so if you consider that you or a colleague may be addicted to alcohol or any drug, you should seek help at the earliest opportunity. MWHT will help any employee who voluntarily declares alcohol or drug dependency to obtain confidential support and advice.

If you do not seek help and subsequently are involved in an accident or fail an alcohol or drugs test, dependency cannot be taken into account and MWHT will not be able to help with support.

It will be too late to help you if you:

- Are involved in an accident or incident.
- Are called in for a test.
- Fail an alcohol or drug test or refuse a test.

Support

Remember that support is always available, if you feel like you cannot speak to your supervisor or manager, contact the below services free of charge:

MWHT Health Assured Confidential Helpline	0800 028 0199 (Available 24 hours)
MWHT Wisdom App	Wisdom (healthassured.org) (Organisation Code - MHA076550)
Alcoholics Anonymous	0800 9177 650 or email help@aamail.org
Frank	0300 123 6600 (available 24 Hours) or text 82111 and Frank will text you back.
DAA	0300 030 3000 (Open 10AM – 10PM)

There is also support available for those living with, or have a family member that is struggling

DRINKLINE – 0300 123 1110

DRUGFAM – 0300 888 3853

Families Anonymous – 0207 4984 680

Safe Limits for General Health

In general, doctors suggest that safe limits for consumption of alcohol, without causing long term health problems, are:

- 14 units per week for both men and women.

Drinking more than this puts you at increased risk of heart disease, stroke, and liver failure.

There are no safe limits for use of illegal drugs; even small amounts can cause lasting damage. Prescription and 'over the counter' medicines should only be used in accordance with the dosage information provided with them; taking excessive doses can be very harmful.

Safety Alerts should not be thought of as an incident investigation report. They are issued to raise awareness of incidents that occur and to highlight the safe work practices required to avoid them being repeated.

