Drug and Alcohol Awareness and Policy — study guide

Drugs and alcohol impair judgement at sea, where the cost of a mistake is often fatal. A company policy exists to protect people, not to punish them. This guide covers the policy, testing, addiction and your own responsibilities.[1][2]

The policy and its purpose

A Drug and Alcohol Policy is determined by the **company**. A company's policy is there to help employees by clarifying the company's policy for drugs and alcohol. A comprehensive company safety management plan includes a written drug and alcohol policy and a drug and alcohol employee statement. Addictions are treated as an **illness**.

What a good policy contains

A sound policy includes training programmes for key personnel, problem identification and intervention, employee health and well-being education, and work environment improvements.

Definitions

- **Drug** (medical definition): a substance intended for use in the treatment, cure, mitigation or prevention of disease.
- **Addiction**: the continuation of an activity that becomes a compulsive behaviour interfering with ordinary responsibilities such as work, relationships, and personal health and hygiene.

Testing

A drug test can be performed by a drug testing agency engaged by the company, by law enforcement, or by a Drug and Alcohol testing trained company safety delegate. A company may test at pre-employment, after an accident, and at random, unannounced times. A company can also test on **suspicion**, but it must test a **group** of employees, not single out one person.

Prescription and over-the-counter medicines

Prescription drugs can alter your mental abilities, and "over-the-counter", non-prescription drugs can have similar psychological effects because they can have the same or similar ingredients and effects. If you take long-term medication prescribed by a doctor, you **must** keep the doctor-issued prescription with you at work and during travel.

Your responsibilities

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The laws and regulations you must adhere to can depend on the country you are working in and the country you are transitioning through. If you suspect someone is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, **report it**.

Key facts to remember

- Policy set by the company; its purpose is to help by clarifying the rules. Addiction is an illness.
- Policy content: key-personnel training, identification/intervention, health education, work-environment improvements.
- Testing: company agency, law enforcement, trained safety delegate; pre-employment, after accident, random (group), or on suspicion (group only).
- Prescription and OTC drugs can both impair you; carry your doctor's prescription at work and when travelling.
- Laws depend on the country you're in and transiting. Report suspected drug or alcohol use.

Sources

1. Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (as amended) — health protection, medical care and the obligation to provide a safe working environment.
2. STCW Convention and Code (as amended, Manila 2010) — fitness for duty, including limits on alcohol consumption.