

Drug and Alcohol Use in the Construction Industry

In a 2020 Nationwide Agent Authority survey of construction company owners, 26% stated that their company had experienced instances of employee addiction to opioid and non-opioid drugs.



Substance abuse is a big problem for the construction industry, which is already challenged with employee shortages, project management logistics, and budget management. In fact, a 2015 study from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) concluded that the construction industry has more drug and alcohol abuse than any other sector except for hospitality and food service. According to the study, among full-time construction workers:¹

- 16.5% (1.6 million people) reported drinking heavily in the previous month (heavy drinking is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as 15 or more drinks per week for men and eight or more for women).
- 11.6% (1.1 million people) said they had used illicit drugs (marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamines, opioids and others) in the past month.
- 14.3% (1.4 million people) reported addiction to alcohol or other drugs.

To bring a finer point to the crisis the Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR) found construction to be one of the industries that has been hit hardest by the opioid crisis.²

Drugs and excessive alcohol consumption in the construction industry is real as stated above. So, you need to ask, do you want to be the business that screens for drugs encouraging drug-using applicants to pass-by or the business known on the street for not testing?



¹ https://www.cat.com/en_US/articles/ci-articles/substance-abuse-and-construction.html

² <https://www.cpwr.com/wp-content/uploads/KF2021-opioid-related-harms-prevention.pdf>



Components of the drug and alcohol program

A one-size-fits-all mentality for what an effective drug and alcohol program needs just doesn't work. Businesses must tailor their policies to their business-specific needs and goals. To this end, work with an appropriate human resource professional or appropriate legal counsel. The following possible components are provided as suggestions:

- Where a specific regulation mandates program components, their guidance for operating legally must be followed. An appropriate professional can assist with guidance.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. Congress established SAMHSA in 1992 to make substance use and mental disorder information, services, and research more accessible. Start your search for their resources [here](#).
- The Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 establishes that under the act, a drug-free workplace policy is required for:¹
 - Any organization that receives a federal contract of \$100,000 or more
 - Any organization receiving a federal grant of any size
- If you are covered by this act, then at a minimum, the organization must:
 - Prepare and distribute a formal drug-free workplace policy statement. This statement should clearly prohibit the manufacture, use, and distribution of controlled substances in the workplace and spell out the specific consequences of violating this policy.
 - Establish a drug-free awareness program. This program should inform employees of the dangers of workplace substance use; review the requirements of the organization's drug-free workplace policy; and offer information about any counseling, rehabilitation, or employee assistance programs (EAPs) that may be available.
 - Ensure that all employees working on the federal contract understand their personal reporting obligations. Under the terms of the Drug-Free Workplace Act, an employee must notify the employer within five calendar days if he or she is convicted of a criminal drug violation.
 - Notify the federal contracting agency of any covered violation. Under the terms of the Drug-Free Workplace Act, the employer has 10 days to report that a covered employee has been convicted of criminal drug violation.
 - Take direct action against an employee convicted of a workplace drug violation. This action may involve imposing a penalty or requiring the offender to participate in an appropriate rehabilitation or counseling program.

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/workplace/legal/federal-laws/contractors-grantees>

- Maintain an ongoing good faith effort to meet all the requirements of the Drug-Free Workplace Act throughout the life of the contract. Covered organizations must demonstrate their intentions and actions toward maintaining a drug-free workplace. Their failure to comply with terms of the Drug-Free Workplace Act may result in a variety of penalties, including suspension or termination of their grants/contracts and being prohibited from applying for future government funding.

Use legal counsel and valid resources?

Need help and advice on substance abuse? The Drug-free Workplace Helpline is a clearinghouse that provides confidential advice. Helpful topics may include issues related to federal and non-federal Drug-free Workplace programs and drug testing. They operate Monday through Friday. Toll-free Hotline 1-800-967-5752 8 to 8 ET or [via email](#).

It is advisable to use advice from an appropriate human resource professional or appropriate legal counsel in most human resource matters to include substance abuse programs.

Some resources that may be helpful include:

- [Drug-Free Construction Website](#)
- Handout on Opioids: [English Version](#) [Spanish Version](#)
- [NSC Calculator](#) - an authoritative, easy-to-use tool providing business leaders with information about the cost of substance use
- [AA Online Meetings](#)
- [In the Rooms Online Meetings](#)
- [Narcotics Anonymous Virtual Meetings \(online and phone\)](#)
- [Narcotics Anonymous World Services \(includes NA help lines and websites\)](#)
- [LifeRing Online Meetings](#)
- [SMART Recovery Online Toolbox \(meetings and resources\)](#)
- [Women for Sobriety \(community forums and phone support\)](#)

Reference

Netscher, P., 2014, Successful Construction Project Management: The practical Guide. Amazon Ed.



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