

Alcohol - Advice

Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream within a few minutes of being consumed and is carried to all parts of the body including the brain.

The concentration and effects of alcohol on an individual can depend on a number of factors:

- Amount consumed.
- Size, age, sex, body build and metabolism.
- Type, and amount, of food in the stomach.

A unit of alcohol is equivalent to 10ml (1cl) of pure alcohol. Typically accepted as a unit measure are:

- Half a pint of average strength beer, lager and cider (3.5% Alcohol By Volume, ABV).
- A small glass of wine (9% ABV).
- A standard pub measure of spirits/fortified wine 25ml (40% ABV).

Remember that premium lagers and many wines have alcohol contents significantly higher than these amounts.

Men should drink no more than 3-4 units per day and women should drink no more than 2-3 units per day to avoid significant risks to health - if you are drinking this amount regularly there is an increased risk to health. Nil consumption of alcohol is advised before driving or carrying out other safety-critical work.

We all need to be aware of these factors and how alcohol affects us. Sensible precautions need to be adopted when drinking during evenings before work the next day to ensure that high levels of alcohol do not remain in our system when we report for work.

It takes a healthy liver about one hour to break down and remove one unit of alcohol. Therefore, as a simple guide, 3 pints of average strength beer (i.e. 6 units) will take 6 hours to be broken down by the body. This must be taken into account even when drinking some considerable time before the start of a work period.

Typical Signs of Alcohol and Drug Misuse

The misuse of alcohol and drugs can manifest itself in many ways. The following physical and mental indicators can give Managers and Supervisors an idea of signs to look out for when considering characteristics which may trigger suspicion :-

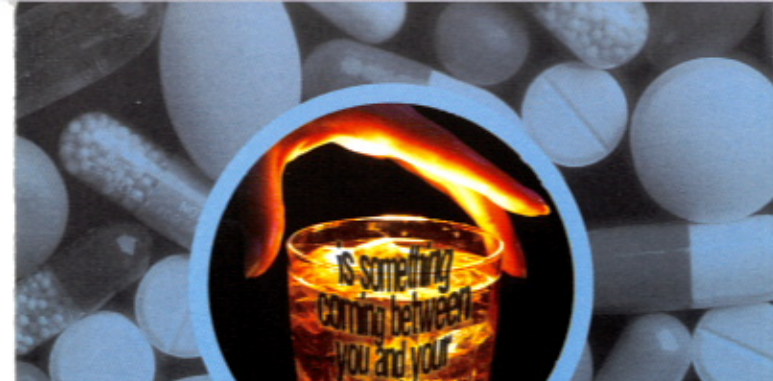
- Sudden mood changes
- Unusual irritability or aggression
- Reduced concern for personal appearance
- Hand tremor
- Dilated pupils
- Tendency towards confusion
- Fluctuations in concentration and energy
- Impaired job performance
- Increased incidence of accidents & near misses
- Poor timekeeping
- Increased sickness
- Frequent absence from post whilst at work
- Deterioration in relationships (colleagues, customers, managers)
- Dishonesty and theft

It is important to ensure that anyone suspected of misusing drugs or alcohol are treated in the strictest confidence.

Members should ensure that Managers, and all Supervisory personnel are aware of these signs. A failure to identify someone with a drugs/alcohol problem has the potential to result in a serious, perhaps fatal, accident.

Quarry Products Association,
156 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9TR
Tel: 020 7730 8194 Fax: 020 7730 4355

Produced in conjunction with
Grendonstar Distribution Ltd, The Towers, Towers 2000 Business Park,
Wilmslow Road, Manchester M20 2SR Tel: 0161 445 1199



General guidance for Members in support of the
QPA advice for developing a Policy on

Drugs and Alcohol

February 2001

FOR FURTHER SPECIALIST INFORMATION,
CONTACT:

 **GRENDONSTAR**
Distribution Ltd

QUARRY
PRODUCTS
ASSOCIATION

Introduction

The Quarry Products Association is aware that the misuse of drugs and alcohol by employees or contractors can have an adverse effect on the performance of individuals and can result in putting themselves and others at considerable risk. Poor performance can also lead to a reduction in profitability/share price etc.

The industry has recently signed the Hard Target pledge jointly with the Health & Safety Commission to reduce accidents by half by 2005. Two of the five topics identified as key to success in this regard are Behavioural Safety and Occupational Health, hence the relevance of this initiative.

Requirements for Policy

As the principal trade association for the quarrying and quarry products industry, the QPA has published Guidelines for developing a Drugs and Alcohol Policy. By producing a company-specific policy, each Member can help optimise their approach to issues such as:

Legal Requirements

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, Transport and Works Act 1992 and Road Traffic Act 1988.

Health, Safety and Welfare

Reduced accident rates for workforce and the public. A healthier and more productive workforce.

Productivity/Performance

Reduction of absenteeism, lateness, timekeeping issues etc.

Reduction in Costs

Lower insurance premiums, less accident investigation costs, fines etc.

Improved Corporate Image

QPA Members can be seen to be responsible and show a positive culture regarding drug and alcohol use/misuse.

Contribution to Sustainability

Sustainable Development comprises three 'pillars' of which the 'social' pillar includes health, safety & welfare of employees, contractors, etc.

Alcohol & Drugs - Statistics

All industries can be affected by problems associated with alcohol and drugs. The following statistics outline the extent of the problem in the UK across all industries :-

Loss of Productivity

Nearly one-third of employee productivity is lost.

Lateness and Absenteeism

Employees 10 times more likely to be late and up to 14.8 million working days lost each year (due to alcohol related absences).

Employees with a problem are 3 times more likely to have periods of sickness leave lasting for more than 8 days.

Safety Issues

Employees nearly 4 times more likely to be involved in accidents.

Dependency

1 in 20 people in UK dependent upon alcohol.

Costs

£3 Billion (estimated) to be the cost to industry for absenteeism and poor performance.

Death

11 people each week are killed in drink-drive related accidents.

Drugs - Advice

Use of any illegal drugs will not be tolerated by Member companies. Such drugs include depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens).

The correct use of prescription drugs and medicines is acceptable provided that these are not misused and that the Doctor/Pharmacist is aware of the individual's occupation/job description.



Any doubts regarding the use of prescription drugs and medicines can be confidentially discussed with the Member company.

Remember that the misuse of drugs by employees needs to be treated as a health, safety and welfare issue. Counselling and rehabilitation would need to be offered on a case-by-case basis before any disciplinary proceedings were invoked.

Information relating to the nature and effects of specific drugs will need to be made available via the usual channels of conveying health and safety information. Confidential, private and independent sources of help and advice also need to be available for all employees.

