Toolbox talk

Drugs and alcohol

Fit for work, and help if you need it

10 minutes | For: Everyone on site

Why it matters

Drugs and alcohol slow reactions and affect judgement. On a construction site that can kill you or someone else, especially when driving, operating plant or working at height. Help is available, and asking for it is the right thing to do.

Key points

1. Turning up to work under the influence puts you and everyone around you at risk.
2. Alcohol can still be in your system the morning after a heavy night.
3. Some prescription and over-the-counter medicines can make you drowsy. Check with a pharmacist.
4. Tell your supervisor if a medicine could affect your work, especially driving or operating plant.
5. Your site may have drug and alcohol testing. Know your company's policy.
6. Watch out for changes in a mate, like lateness, mood swings or more accidents.
7. Dependence is a recognised medical problem. Asking for help early gives you the best chance of support.
8. Free, confidential help is available from FRANK, Drinkline and the Construction Industry Helpline.

Sources: HSE: Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work; HSE: Supporting employees with drug or alcohol problems; FRANK: Honest information about drugs; NHS: Alcohol support.

This talk supports, but does not replace, your site-specific risk assessment, method statement, training and supervision. Free to copy and use. **tradefoxapp.com/toolbox-talks/drugs-alcohol**

Toolbox talk

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Do

- Turn up fit for work, every shift.
- Read the leaflet with any medicine and ask a pharmacist if unsure.
- Speak up if you think someone is unfit for safety-critical work.
- Talk to someone you trust if you're worried about your drinking or drug use.
- Know your company's drug and alcohol policy.

Don't

- Don't drive, operate plant or work at height if you're not fit to.
- Don't bring drugs or alcohol onto site.
- Don't cover for a mate who's unfit for work. It could cost them their life.
- Don't assume you're fine the morning after a heavy night.

Ask the group

- What does our company policy say about drugs and alcohol?
- How could you tell if a mate wasn't fit to work?
- What would you do if you were worried about someone?
- Do you know where to get confidential help?

If it goes wrong: Stop an unfit person doing safety-critical work and tell your supervisor. Call 999 for unconsciousness or serious illness. If not breathing normally, start CPR and follow the call handler. If breathing normally, use the recovery position. Support: FRANK 0300 123 6600; Drinkline 0300 123 1110.

On this site

Nearest first aider _____

Emergency assembly point _____

Site-specific hazards and controls _____

_____

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Go further: Mental health support for construction workers

Sources: HSE: Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work; HSE: Supporting employees with drug or alcohol problems; FRANK: Honest information about drugs; NHS: Alcohol support.

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Attendance register

Drugs and alcohol

Site / project

Date and time

Presented by

Company

	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

By signing, attendees confirm they took part in this toolbox talk and understood the key points. Keep this record with your site safety file.

Presenter signature

Follow-up actions

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Go further: Mental health support for construction workers

Sources: HSE: Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work; HSE: Supporting employees with drug or alcohol problems; FRANK: Honest information about drugs; NHS: Alcohol support.

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Quick check

Drugs and alcohol

Tick one answer for each question. Your presenter has the answers.

Name _____ Date _____

1. Can alcohol still affect you the morning after?

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] Only if you feel ill

2. Your medicine says it may cause drowsiness. What should you do?

- [ ] Ignore it
- [ ] Check with a pharmacist and tell your supervisor
- [ ] Take more coffee

3. A mate seems unfit for work. What do you do?

- [ ] Cover for them
- [ ] Tell your supervisor
- [ ] Ignore it

4. Where can you get confidential help for drugs?

- [ ] FRANK on 0300 123 6600
- [ ] Nowhere
- [ ] Only your GP

5. What does HSE say drug or alcohol dependence is?

- [ ] A recognised medical problem
- [ ] Always a sacking offence
- [ ] Not an employer's concern

For the presenter

Answers and sources

Quick check answers

1. Yes

Your body clears alcohol slowly, so you can still be impaired the next morning.

2. Check with a pharmacist and tell your supervisor

Drowsy medicines can be dangerous when driving, using plant or working at height.

3. Tell your supervisor

Covering for someone puts them and others at risk. Speaking up could save a life.

4. FRANK on 0300 123 6600

FRANK gives free, confidential advice about drugs. You can call, text or chat online.

5. A recognised medical problem

HSE says dependence is a recognised medical problem, and dismissing someone without trying to help may be unfair. Check your company policy.

Sources

- HSE: Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/index.htm
- HSE: Supporting employees with drug or alcohol problems
  https://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/support-employees.htm
- FRANK: Honest information about drugs
  https://www.talktofrank.com/
- NHS: Alcohol support
  https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/alcohol-support/

> **Presenting tips:** keep it to about 10 minutes, use real examples from your site, ask the group questions rather than reading everything out, and record attendance on the register.

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Not fit? Don't start.

1. **Turn up fit for work**
2. **Check medicines with a pharmacist**
3. **Ask for help, it's confidential**

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Sources and qualifications

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Scope: Great Britain safety legislation unless a nation is identified. Northern Ireland has separate legislation. Site rules can be stricter than minimum legal duties; use the site assessment, instructions and competent supervision.

A4 applicability: no installation-design requirement is asserted in this talk. Its claims are referenced to the subject-specific sources below.

S1. HSE: Drugs and alcohol at work

Impairment, safety-critical work, medication, workplace policy and support; key points, Do/Don't and quiz.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/index.htm

S2. HSE: Supporting employees

Early support and confidential help; Why it matters and key points 6-8.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/support-employees.htm

S3. NHS: Alcohol support

Alcohol dependence, treatment and existing Drinkline details.

https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/alcohol-support/

S4. FRANK

Existing drug information/support contact.

https://www.talktofrank.com/

S5. St John Ambulance: Recovery position

Recovery position only when unresponsive but breathing normally; follow 999 guidance.

https://www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/recovery-position/

S6. Resuscitation Council UK: How to do CPR

If unresponsive and not breathing normally, call 999 and start CPR; emergency box.

https://www.resus.org.uk/public-resource/how-do-cpr