Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace – Landscaping Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Maintaining a drug and alcohol-free workplace is critical in landscaping, where the operation of heavy machinery, use of sharp tools, and physically demanding tasks are part of the daily routine. Impairment due to drugs or alcohol can lead to serious accidents, injuries, and even fatalities, not only putting the impaired worker at risk but also endangering the entire crew.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

The dangers and risks associated with drug and alcohol use in the landscaping industry affect the entire workplace with far ranging consequences.

Specific Risks

1. Increased Risk of Accidents

- **Impaired Judgment and Coordination:** Drug or alcohol use impairs cognitive functions and physical coordination, leading to poor decision-making and an inability to safely operate equipment.
- **Delayed Reaction Times:** Slower reaction times increase the likelihood of accidents.

2. Higher Likelihood of Injuries

- **Machinery-Related Incidents:** Operating landscaping machinery while under the influence can result in serious injuries, such as cuts, amputations, or even fatalities.
- **Slip, Trip, and Fall Hazards: I**ncreases the risk of slips, trips, and falls.

3. Compromised Team Safety

- **Endangering Co-Workers:** An impaired worker is also a risk to others.
- **Distracted and Unfocused Work:** Drug or alcohol use can lead to distracted or unfocused behavior, increasing the likelihood of failing to notice hazards.

4. Reduced Productivity and Quality of Work

    - **Inconsistent Performance:** Substance use leads to inconsistent work quality and an overall reduction in productivity.
    - **Increased Absenteeism:** Workers struggling with substance abuse are more likely to miss work, leading to increased workload for others.

5. Legal and Financial Ramifications

    - **Workers' Compensation Claims:** Costly workers' compensation claims and increased insurance premiums.
    - **Legal Liability:** Employers may be held liable for accidents involving impaired workers.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Ensure your landscaping team remains safe and substance-free by adapting the following:

Establish a Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace

- **Zero-Tolerance Policy:** The foundation of a safe workplace is a clear, well-communicated zero-tolerance policy for drugs and alcohol. Make sure every employee understands the policy and the reasons behind it—this is about protecting lives.
- **Employee Education:** Educate your team on the dangers of substance abuse, the specifics of your company's policies, and the resources available to those who might need help.

Pre-Employment Screening

- **Drug Testing:** Implement pre-employment drug testing as a standard part of your hiring process.
- **Background Checks:** Conduct background checks to identify any history of substance abuse.

Random Drug Testing

- **Ongoing Testing:** To deter substance use, random drug and alcohol testing should be part of your ongoing safety program.
- **Post-Incident Testing:** After any workplace accident or near-miss, conduct drug and alcohol testing to determine if impairment was a factor.

Support for Employees

- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Let employees know that help is available, and that seeking assistance is encouraged, not penalized.
- **Rehabilitation Programs:** Encourage employees with substance abuse issues to take advantage of rehabilitation programs.

Enforcement and Consequences

- **Consistent Enforcement:** Take immediate and consistent action when substance abuse is detected. This sends a clear message that safety cannot be compromised.
- **Legal Compliance:** Stay informed about all laws regarding workplace drug and alcohol policies. Keep thorough records of all incidents, tests, and disciplinary actions related to substance abuse.

FINAL WORD

In landscaping, where the risks are already high, the presence of substances can turn an ordinary day into a deadly one. By implementing strict policies, offering support, and fostering a culture of safety, landscaping companies can protect their most valuable assets—their employees.