





Problematic substance abuse

IFALPA encourages the civil aviation workplace to be free of problematic substance use. However, no matter how small a working place is, there will always be people who have, or will develop problematic substance use.






It is known that the earlier the problem is recognised and treated, the better results are achieved. If, for example, the consumption of alcohol can be reduced before actual alcoholism or dependence of alcohol develops, the likelihood of success is far greater than when treating alcoholics. This is why IFALPA feels that programs that aim for early recognition of excessive use of alcohol, e.g. peer intervention programs, should be encouraged and used.

Random testing does not prevent use of problematic substances, nor help the person with this problem and is not cost effective. This is why IFALPA opposes random testing. If, however, random tests are used, their outcome should not be punitive, but lead to proper treatment. The problematic substance use should be considered as an illness, which requires diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation with a view to return to work.

In IFALPA's opinion, problematic substance use testing should be limited to;


-  pre-employment testing
-  post-accident testing
-  return to duty and follow-up testing for rehabilitation cases
-  "Reasonable suspicion" testing.

However, when testing is used for "Reasonable suspicion" testing, the following criteria should be met:

-  When two trained supervisors believe an individual has violated the rules, prohibitions based upon specific immediate, describable observations of the individual's appearance, behaviour, speech, or body odours
-  Reasonable suspicion testing under the alcohol testing rule may be based only on short term factors – what the supervisor sees at the time of performance of safety-sensitive duties – not on long term performance factors such as excessive use of sick leave.
-  Supervisors may not order reasonable suspicion testing based only on third party reports of alcohol misuse (e.g. a passenger's report).
-  Such testing is authorised only if the supervisor's required observations are made during, just preceding, or just after the individual's performance of safety-sensitive functions. A supervisor who finds reasonable suspicion for alcohol testing may not conduct the breath test on that individual.
-  As with post accident testing, a reasonable suspicion test must be given as soon as possible, but not later than eight hours after the determination of reasonable suspicion.



Reasonable suspicion testing under the alcohol testing rule may be based only on short term factors

 Testing procedures that could have negative employment consequences necessitate forensic testing as opposed to clinical testing. Retrospective calculation is not acceptable under any circumstances.

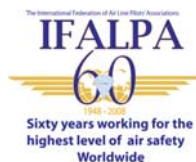
Note 1

Definition for the problematic use of substances (Rules of the Air, ICAO): The use of one or more psychoactive substances by aviation personnel in a way that:

- a) Constitutes a direct hazard to the user or endangers the lives, health or welfare of others; and/or*
- b) Causes or worsens an occupational, social, mental or physical problem or disorder.*

Note 2

Definition for psychoactive substances (Rules of the Air, ICAO): Alcohol, opioids, cannabinoids, sedatives and hypnotics, cocaine, other psychostimulants, hallucinogens, and volatile solvents, whereas coffee and tobacco are excluded.



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