



DrugFree@WorkPlace

Importance of Random Drug Testing

When addicted workers use drugs, they put their coworkers and the company's customers and clients at risk.

While many job applicants must pass an initial drug test as part of the hiring process, they are often not required to be randomly screened for drugs after being hired. But random testing is important, because it helps to ensure a safe workplace while giving customers and clients confidence in the company's goods, products, and services. With the increase in substance abuse in America at epidemic levels, random drug testing is more important than ever.

In January of this year, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) doubled the minimum annual percentage rate for random controlled substance testing for commercial motor vehicle drivers, from 25% to 50%.

FMCSA estimates that there are 3.2 million CDL holders operating in interstate commerce and 1 million CDL holders operating in intrastate commerce. That means that the minimum number of random drug tests performed will increase from 1.05 million at the previous 25% rate to approximately 2.1 million in calendar year 2020.

Why did the federal government double the mandatory random drug testing percentage? It's because there was an increase in positive drug tests in 2019. When more truck drivers test positive for drugs, it creates a clear safety concern and action must be taken to protect the motoring public.

History of Random Testing

The United States first implemented mandatory random drug testing of safety-sensitive employees during the 1980s. The practice began after the U.S. military saw significant reductions in drug use by military personnel who were subjected to random testing.

Private employers saw the value of drug testing by the federal government and instituted drug free workplace programs. Today, approximately 90% of Fortune 1000 companies and 62% of all employers in the United States have mandatory drug testing programs.

Since drug testing of employees began, not only has drug testing technology greatly improved, but there is also abundant experience with random testing that demonstrates its effectiveness in identifying drug users and deterring drug use. What makes random testing so effective is the element of surprise. While employees know they will be tested, they are never quite sure of *when*.

Value of Random Drug Testing

There has always been a close relationship between safety concerns and workplace drug screening programs. When one considers the fact that vehicle crashes account for a large portion of accidents and fatalities on the job every year, the value of random drug testing at work becomes evident. Waiting until after an accident to implement drug testing doesn't protect the employee, or an innocent victim, who could be seriously injured or killed in a car or

truck crash. Random testing, however, serves as a deterrent.

Random drug testing at work makes the working environment a much safer place to be. When random testing is in place, employees are less worried about their welfare and productivity increases. Drug-related incidents are reduced, and the well-being of employees is protected.

Increase in Random Testing Nationwide

Most companies in the U.S. are already applying pre-employment testing and post-accident testing to their employees, but by adding random drug testing a drug free workplace program is more likely to save lives, protect citizens, and ensure the financial stability of the company. In addition to the increase in federally required random drug testing, some employers not subject to federal requirements have begun selecting and testing more frequently.

Mandatory random employee drug testing is usually reserved for employees in "safety-sensitive" positions. However, in many companies employees in non-safety-sensitive positions are responsible for making critical decisions and taking actions that directly affect the safety of coworkers and the financial well-being of the company. Therefore, many employers and supervisors believe that these positions should also be considered safety sensitive, and random testing for these positions is increasing.

Here are a few additional reasons why more U.S. companies are implementing random testing:

- Random testing saves lives and prevents injuries.
- Random drug tests help employers identify workers with substance abuse issues and facilitate their treatment.
- Random controlled substance testing allows employees to easily say no to illegal drug use: "No, thanks—they drug test at work."
- Random testing reduces employer liability, and it is a fair way of testing.

Random testing can save careers and families as well as protect coworkers and customers. It is a proven, low-cost strategy which identifies those needing help, reduces demand, cuts accidents and sick leave, improves attendance, and increases productivity.

Random drug testing is a benefit to those tested—and not a threat. However, while random testing has great value as a part of any drug free workplace program, the primary aim should not be to fire an employee, but to discourage abuse, offer help, and provide treatment.

Random drug testing should always comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws, and be introduced in a company in a sensitive way and as part of a comprehensive drug free workplace program including drug education and access to confidential treatment.