

Professional Miners Program

Newsletter

Issue 3/September 2005



DRUNK AT WORK?

YOU TELL HIS KIDS.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL HAVE NO PLACE IN THE MINES.

Alcohol and Drug Use/Abuse in Mining

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) is launching a new initiative this fall to address alcohol and drug use in mining. This initiative will include activities such as an MSHA Outreach Campaign, an online slogan campaign, and the development of DVDs, posters and stickers. MSHA is coordinating these efforts with the U.S. Department of Labor's Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace Program.

The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Association (JAHSA) also will play an important role by providing miners and mine operators with information about how they can work together to help protect their mines from hazards resulting from the use of alcohol and other drugs. JAHSA will release a special edition of the Bulletin targeting alcohol and drug abuse in the mines with articles for both operators and miners. For now, this issue of our newsletter provides a brief introduction to this important subject to our Professional Miners.

- Doug Conaway

Many of the communities in which mining is the main industry are experiencing serious problems from the use and abuse of drugs. Some recent mining accident reports have shown the presence of drugs or alcohol in the victims.

Mining is a complicated and potentially hazardous occupation, and a clear focus by all personnel is vital. Drugs, including alcohol, alter the mind and body. They can hinder judgment, distort perception, decrease reaction time and interfere with job skills needed to work safely. The bottom line is that the use or abuse of alcohol or drugs in the mines can significantly impair a miner's ability to focus on their job, leading to hazards that can injure or kill, not only themselves, but also many other workers.

The good news is that alcohol and drug abuse can be overcome. Often, support from co-workers is critical. Part of the Professional Miner's Pledge states that you "will work to ensure a safe, healthy and alcohol and drug-free work-place for myself and

co-workers." In that spirit, this newsletter provides you, the Professional Miner, with information about and strategies for addressing this health and safety concern with your fellow miners.

With your help, JAHSA and MSHA can increase awareness about this serious issue and make the nation's mines and mining communities safer and stronger.

First, it is important to know how to recognize when a co-worker might have a problem with alcohol or drugs. Although no one wants to believe that a co-worker has a substance abuse problem, you must be willing to acknowledge any evidence of a problem.

??? DID YOU KNOW ???

- Alcohol is the most widely abused drug among working adults; an estimated 6.2% of adults working full time are heavy drinkers.
- More than 60% of adults know someone who has reported for work under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Most substance abusers are employed – a 2003 government survey found that 76.8% of adults with substance dependence or abuse problems were employed either full or part time.



There are many signs both on and off the job; some common emotional, behavioral or physical signs include:

- **Emotional:** increased aggression, anxiety,, burnout, denial, depression, paranoia.
- **Behavioral:** excessive talking, impaired coordination, irritability, lack of en-ergy, limited attention span, poor motivation.
- **Physical:** chills, smell of alcohol, sweating, weight loss, physical deterioration.

Also be aware of continual missed appointments, excessive and unexplained absences or days off, carelessness and repeated mistakes, risk taking and disregard for safety.

Second, it is important that fellow employees, as well as employers, not tolerate unacceptable behavior by a worker who is misusing drugs or alcohol. Below are examples of ways someone might hide such behavior and prevent or delay a person with a problem from getting the help he or she needs:

- Covering up for a person's behavior by providing alibis, making excuses or doing an impaired co-worker's work
- Rationalizing or developing reasons why the person's continued use is understandable or acceptable
- Withdrawing or avoiding contact with the person with the problem
- Confronting the person by saying that you will take action (for example, turning the person in), but not following through when the person continues to use the drug.

It is the responsibility of every employee, manager and owner to be aware of their surroundings and to do what they can to make the work envi-ronment safe for everyone.

Third, show concern for and help your fellow miners. Workplace substance use and abuse should not be taken lightly, especially where co-workers rely on each other for safety. While supervisors can confront workers whose drug use behavior affects their job performance, co-workers may be able to help before this occurs. Also, they can do this on or off the worksite and emphasize the benefits of seeking help early. If you suspect someone has a

problem, follow these steps:

1. Tell the person you have noticed a change in them and express your concern.
2. DON'T talk to other co-workers about your concern, as rumors can be vicious.
3. Urge the person to get help and give them information about how to get it.



Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are generally the best place to direct co-workers experiencing personal problems, including alcohol and drug abuse. EAPs provide counseling and referrals that support employees. But, even if there is no EAP at your company, you can still help. Here are some resources that can provide guidance:

American Council on Alcoholism
1-800-527-5344 or www.aca-usa.org

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
www.ncadd.org

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Professional Miner's Pledge

As a Professional Miner I pledge to serve as a positive role model for other miners, and as a mentor for new miners. By recognizing "Safety and Health are Values," I will work to ensure a safe, healthy, and alcohol and drug free workplace for myself and coworkers, and promote and participate in health and safety initiatives.