

Top 10 causes of substance use in Ontario sawmills

Workplace impairment is top health and safety risk

As identified by workers, supervisors, and employers in the Ontario sawmill industry through Ministry of Labour-facilitated risk assessment and root-cause analysis workshops in partnership with Workplace Safety North.



1. Lack of preventative tools
- policies and procedures, testing, communication.



2. Ineffective communication at the workplace on this topic.



3. No current consensus from governing bodies on safe limits for consuming cannabis or prescription drugs (unlike alcohol).



4. Personal factor variability - substance use affects people differently.



5. Lack of policies and procedures including lack of clarity, effectiveness and communication, if any.



6. Lack of management support on this issue - unclear understanding and expectation from management.



7. Lack of quality training for supervisors (regarding cannabis and human rights legislation).



8. THC content and drug interaction can vary.



9. Social acceptance.



10. No root-cause statistics on how substance use affects workplace incidents - lack of information and data.

For a detailed list of critical controls you can put in place to help prevent impairment in the workplace, read the technical paper: Root cause analysis report of substance use in Ontario sawmills.

Top 3 prevention tools: Clear policies, communication and training

Technical paper provides detailed list of critical controls you can put in place

Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs – prescription or not – is a longstanding safety concern in the workplace. It’s time to have the safety conversation, reduce stigma, and provide support.

The internal responsibility system is a system, within a workplace, where everyone shares responsibility for occupational health and safety that is appropriate to their role and function within the workplace. All workplace parties – including employers, managers, supervisors, and workers – need to do their part to raise awareness of risks, and follow and promote safety procedures to help make workplaces safer.



What to focus on immediately

Focus right away on the following five common mitigation actions to address current systemic weaknesses:

- A. Clearly defined, effective, well-written and well-communicated policies**
- B. Specific training for supervisors on recognizing and dealing with impairment**
- C. Basic awareness training to all in the workplace (including how to recognize impairment)**
- D. Inventory of safety-sensitive job tasks, which is reinforced through written policy**
- E. Training for management and supervisor to communicate effectively (leadership program)**

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Drug and Alcohol Awareness Training for Supervisors

In partnership with CannAmm, this training program meets and exceeds the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements for supervisor drug and alcohol training. It is also highly recommended for non-DOT employers as it conforms to the Construction Owners Association of Alberta Canadian Model and industry standards for providing a safe workplace.

Intended audience: This course is suggested for managers, supervisors, or employees with responsibility for workplace safety.

Training Goal: This course will educate the participants on the basics of a fit-for-duty program, as well as training to recognize signs and symptoms of drug and alcohol use and abuse, and offers approaches and required documentation for reasonable cause testing.

Course Length

Four hours of classroom training
Two hours of Online training delivered

About Workplace Safety North

An independent not-for-profit, Workplace Safety North is one of four health and safety associations in Ontario, and the only one based in the north. WSN provides provincially-approved workplace health and safety services for mining and forest products sectors, as well as businesses and communities across northern Ontario.

With health and safety specialists located across the province, WSN and its legacy organizations have been helping make Ontario communities safer for more than 100 years. As a leading provider of health and safety services, businesses and communities call upon WSN for expert advice and training.

For more information, please contact your WSN Health and Safety Specialist or visit workplacesafetynorth.ca