



IMPAIRED DRIVING

TSH 01 • OCT 2020

LENGTH 2–5 minutes

TO PREPARE Read the background information.

Bring the company’s policy on drug and alcohol use for reference.

BACKGROUND

- Across the nation, there has been an increase in drug impairment in our communities and workplace. Yet, in a recent study by the National Safety Council, only 39% of employers viewed prescription drug use as a threat to safety.
- The frequency of drivers with prescription opioids detected in their systems at the time of death increased from 1% in 1995 to 7.2% in 2015.
- Alcohol and prescription drugs, not just illegal drugs, should be included in safety talks about impaired driving.
- Impairment begins with the first drink. Your gender, body weight, the number of drinks you’ve consumed and the amount of food you’ve eaten, affect the body’s ability to handle alcohol. Two or three beers in an hour can make some people legally intoxicated. Women, younger people and smaller people generally become impaired with less alcohol.

DISCUSSION

- “Go with the flow.” It means to just take things as they come and deal with them. It is a great way to live and not be so stressed out over details, right? Who knows someone who “goes with the flow?”



When we talk about impairment, what do you think it means?

- A person’s abilities are affected by alcohol, illegal drugs such as cocaine and marijuana, and prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
- Impairment begins with the first drink. Your gender, body weight, the number of drinks you have consumed and the amount of food you have eaten affect your body’s ability to handle alcohol. Two or three beers in an hour can make some people legally intoxicated.



- Women, younger people and smaller people generally become impaired with less alcohol.



What abilities change when someone is impaired?

- The first ability affected by alcohol is judgment. For some people, it only takes one drink to impact decision-making.
- Abilities that affect driving, such as making decisions, reaction time, depth perception and coordination are all affected by drugs and alcohol.



Planning is important, so you and/or your group having a designated driver, someone who plans to stay alcohol-free, is important. Your designated driver decided to take a few shots with the rest of the group. Now it's time to head home. What choices do you have?

- See if you can stay overnight.
- Call a sober friend or family member to pick you up.
- Contact a driving service or choose a public transit system if you live in a city.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Prescription Drug impairment

Pose this question to your employees: Your doctor wants to prescribe painkillers for your back injury. You are concerned the medicine might affect your ability to drive and your ability to work. What can you do?

Discussion should include the company policy on reporting prescription drug use and other policies related to drugs in your company. Encourage your workers to ask the doctor about the drug's effects and what other options for pain management are available.

SUMMARY

- Planning is important when you are going to drink alcohol. Have a plan and be ready to change plans if the situation changes. Your safety is still the most important goal.
- Know what drugs you are using (prescription and over-the-counter), how they affect you and what your company policies are so you can work and drive safely.