

SUBSTANCE-RELATED IMPAIRMENT

Substance-related impairment can reduce a worker's mental and physical abilities. It can affect thinking and decision-making, increase risky driving behaviours, slow reaction time and reflexes, reduce attention, make it harder to track moving objects, distort the sense of time and distance, and impair coordination and lane control.

The most common substance-related causes of workplace impairment include alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, prescription drugs, and over-the-counter medications.

Combining cannabis with alcohol or other drugs increases impairment. Even small amounts of each substance can greatly raise the risk of a collision when used together.

LEARN HOW TO SPOT THE WARNING SIGNS OF IMPAIRMENT:

- HOW LONG ALCOHOL CAN AFFECT WORK
- HOW LONG CANNABIS CAN AFFECT WORK
- WARNING SIGNS OF IMPAIRMENT
- HOW TO PREVENT IMPAIRMENT



BC Forest Safety

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SUBSTANCE-RELATED IMPAIRMENT



HOW LONG ALCOHOL CAN AFFECT WORK

- Even small amounts of alcohol can affect a person's ability to work safely. Alcohol affects everyone differently, and impairment can begin with the first drink. Tolerance does not remove the risk; someone who drinks often may feel fine but still be unable to work safely.
- Alcohol remains in the bloodstream until the body fully breaks it down, which can take several hours. ***Workers may still be impaired the morning after drinking the night before.***

HOW LONG CAN CANNABIS AFFECT WORK

- Working within 3 hours of using cannabis can double the risk of an injury.
- For most people, cannabis effects can last up to 5 hours after smoking and 6 to 12 hours or longer after consuming edibles. Even after the "high" wears off, coordination, reaction time, and judgment may still be affected.
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) can stay in the body for weeks. This means a worker may test positive even when they are not intoxicated or currently impaired.

WARNING SIGNS OF IMPAIRMENTS

Workers who are impaired may not recognize it themselves. Employers, supervisors, and co-workers need to stay alert and respond when they see warning signs.

- Alcohol or drug odour, glassy or red eyes, unsteady walking, slurred speech, or poor coordination
- Reduced productivity or lower-quality work
- Unusual or erratic behaviour, reactions, or speech
- Unusual or frequent mistakes
- Lateness, longer breaks, or more frequent breaks

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT IMPAIRMENT

Being fit to work is part of every worker's safety rights and responsibilities. It also depends on the choices you make before and during your shift. To help ensure you are ready to work safely:

- Know and follow your employer's impairment policy.
- Do not work if impairment could put you or others at risk.
- Tell a supervisor if your ability to work safely is impaired for any reason.
- Tell a supervisor if a co-worker appears to be impaired.

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