



Supervisor Newsletter

Random Testing Benefits

Many supervisors agree that random drug testing helps to promote health and safety in the workplace. Substance abusers pose a safety risk, and random testing can serve as an effective deterrent to drug use at work.

Random testing can be a strong deterrent to drug users because it is conducted on an unannounced basis. By using a random selection process, managers ensure that there is no bias or discrimination and that all employees have an equal chance of being selected, even those who have been drug tested recently.

Workers who use drugs place companies in precarious legal positions by showing up to work in a state of mind that is unfit for the safe performance of their jobs. When employers do *not* random drug test employees, they could be putting their company at risk of a lawsuit when an accident occurs that injures workers.

Invasion of Privacy?

Random testing has been shown to result in fewer accidents; fewer disciplinary actions over time; and reduced losses due to absenteeism, theft, and fraud. Random testing can also contribute to improved *employee* morale and productivity, lower costs due to losses and errors, and reduced costs of insurance claims. The safer that employees feel while on the job, the more productive they will be. No one wants to work beside a drug impaired coworker. However, there are those who feel that random testing is an invasion of privacy, or an unfair way for business owners to justify taking adverse action against workers. But in many instances, caring employers and supervisors will conduct random drug testing with the goal of directing employees who test positive towards the proper help that they need.

A supervisor that displays genuine concern for the safety and well-being of the company's employees, and who has a desire to help drug addicts and alcoholics get well, will always have more success in getting workers to reach their full potential. Effective supervisors know that a safe, drug free work environment is a more productive workplace.

The majority of state-certified drug free workplace employers do not terminate employees who fail random drug tests. Instead, the employee is given the option of going to a treatment/counseling program in exchange for keeping his or her job. In some instances, the worker will be referred to an outpatient facility, so that he or she can continue working while receiving treatment for his or her drug related issue. Still, some employees tend to see themselves as a separate entity from their employers, which fosters an "us against them" mentality. Unfortunately, this kind of attitude can result in unhealthy workforce morale.

Random Testing Required?

Drug abuse in the workplace puts companies at risk for increased accidents, more absenteeism, lower productivity, and higher insurance costs. Random drug testing helps to mitigate these risks by filtering out drug users from the workforce, as well as deterring drug use within it. The federal government recognizes this, and that is why federally mandated, safety-sensitive workers—which include pilots, bus drivers, truck drivers, and workers in nuclear power plants—are required to undergo random drug testing as mandated by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, because this type of testing has no advance notice, it acts as a deterrent.

Random Selection Methodology

Because every business and workforce is unique, each employer should make a careful determination about the drug testing program elements that are most beneficial for his or her workplace. But whether a company is required to conduct random drug testing or chooses to do so, it is vital to follow state and federal requirements. At the state level, there are varying laws about what kind of drug testing is permissible. In order to remain compliant with federal random drug testing regulations and avoid costly fines, an organization must be sure it is meeting the specific standards of the regulating authority.

The U.S. Department of Transportation recommends that, regardless of job titles, people should be chosen for testing based on their job function. Non-DOT regulated employers often choose to perform random drug testing only on their safety-sensitive employees.

Random drug testing selections within every company should be based on the size of the employee pool, program period, and frequency rate. If random testing is implemented, one or more individuals should be periodically chosen for testing from all of the employees in the company's workplace drug testing program. A rigorous, comprehensive method of selection will help to ensure that every eligible employee has an equal opportunity of being chosen for testing during each selection period.

To conduct a truly random drug screening test, employers must use a statistically valid random generator like the one found at random.org, or the selection process

should be contracted out to a third-party administrator. Regardless of the method used, employers should establish a consistent, reproducible method of choosing testing candidates in order to maintain a fair and compliant program. A key factor that helps to determine which testing rates an employer should select is the supervisor's ability to locate, notify, and collect a specimen from the individuals selected for testing.

It is also extremely important to limit the amount of time between when an employee is notified and when that individual is tested. If a random testing program runs on a too-predictable schedule, or if an employee is given advanced notice that random testing is coming up, then it opens up the possibility for workers to take measures to evade detection. It is recommended that the only amount of time permitted to lapse between notification and testing is the amount of time it takes for the employee to get from the business to the testing facility. If a worker fails to complete testing within the appropriate window, then it should be considered a refusal to test.

Random Testing Combined With Pre-Employment Testing

Random drug testing works best when combined with a pre-employment testing program that's designed to keep drug users from being hired in the first place. Both reasons for testing should be included in the company's substance abuse and drug testing policy—and to whatever degree is appropriate, should be openly shared with applicants and employees, as just having a program in place can be an effective means of discouraging drug use.

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