

Five Things to Know About Prescription Painkiller Abuse



Prescription painkiller use kills about 45 people every day across the United States. The National Safety Council says employers need to know these five things about prescription painkiller abuse and how it affects both employee safety and the financial security of their businesses:

1. Opioid painkillers compromise employee safety. Even a legitimately prescribed amount of painkillers can impair a worker's ability to operate equipment, drive or perform other job duties safely.
2. Workers prescribed opioids have higher workers' compensation claims. Workers prescribed even one opioid have four times more expensive total claims costs than workers with similar claims who didn't get opioids. And employers and insurers have been held financially accountable for overdose deaths tied to injured workers.
3. Employers play an important role in helping their employees seek treatment. Research shows that employee recovery rates from prescription painkiller abuse are higher when employers—rather than friends or family—offer or suggest treatment.
4. Opioid painkillers can delay recovery and return to work following an injury. "Return to work" and "fitness for duty" criteria vary widely, so it's often difficult for employers to determine when an employee can safely begin working while under the influence of prescription painkillers. Opioid painkillers also delay recovery from workplace injuries.
5. Using Opioid painkillers increases the likelihood of disability claims. Receiving more than a one-week supply of Opioids soon after an injury doubles a worker's risk for disability one year later.