

# TOOLBOX TALKS

A Quality Service Contractors Publication for Members

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## Alcohol & The Job – A Safety Issue



Working under the influence of alcohol is strictly prohibited. This means more than just not drinking on the job. Tests have shown that alcohol can still have an effect on your body up to 18 hours after you have stopped drinking. Alcohol use is a legitimate on-the-job safety issue – and not just an attempt to control off-the-clock lifestyles.

Alcohol is a sedative. Drinking any quantity of alcohol impairs a person's judgement, thinking ability, and coordination to some degree. Some people can "handle" alcohol better than others, but it is a fact that any alcohol consumed has some effect. Other factors which influence your body's ability to metabolize alcohol include your weight, medications, and previous medical conditions. You may not feel it right away, but remember, alcohol affects judgment.

After drinking, you are no longer in a position to assess your own capabilities. You don't have to be drunk to have some impairment. If you can't make through the day without a drink, you could have a problem and should seek professional help.

What should you do about a co-worker who is drinking on the job? Should you ignore the situation or report it? Most people would ignore the situation because they do not want to cause problems on the job or do not want to get involved. People would prefer to avoid conflict at almost any cost. But look at it this way – the drinker, no matter how nice a co-worker, is not doing you any favors. It's a fact that the drinker is more likely to be involved in accidents. Who else is he or she placing at risk? You!

Are you allowing the drinking to continue?

- You are – if you cover the drinker's poor productivity.
- You are – if you cover their mistakes.
- You are – if you make excuses to others for them.



Take control of the situation.

- Don't allow the situation to continue. Stop covering for the drinker.
  - Talk to your supervisor. It is your responsibility to talk to your supervisor whenever any performance or safety issue affects your job. A drinking worker could be just as dangerous as a defective saw. You wouldn't hesitate to bring the saw to your supervisor's attention, would you?
  - If you are uncomfortable, suggest to your supervisor that there may be a problem. A good supervisor will take the initiative and pick up the issue from there.

Whatever you do, make sure you do something. Watch out for your co-worker as they may need help. If you don't, you may pay dearly for someone else's mistake.



Quality Service Contractors—An Enhanced Service Group of PHCC  
180 S Washington St, Falls Church, VA 22046, USA  
Phone: (800) 533-7694, Outside USA: (703) 237-8100, Fax: (703) 237-7442  
Visit our website [www.qsc-phcc.org](http://www.qsc-phcc.org)