

WESTERN POWER ALCOHOL AND DRUG MANAGEMENT STANDARD

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is Western Power introducing an alcohol and drug standard?

Western Power has a duty of care under occupational safety and health legislation for ensuring a workplace free of hazards and to ensure that individuals are fit for work.

2. When does this new standard take effect?

The new standard takes effect from 1 July 2008. It has been fully endorsed by Western Power's Executive Committee.

3. How was the standard developed?

A safe work practice assessment, conducted by an independent safety and health specialist in May 2006, recommended that Western Power review its alcohol and drug management practices. As part of Western Power's 100-Day Safety Plan a project team developed a draft standard. Extensive consultation and feedback on the draft standard was provided from a wide range of employees and locations.

4. What is the standard and what does it mean for me?

The standard requires that you be fit for work. The basis of the standard is self-management supported by testing. Anyone performing work for Western Power is required to maintain a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.00 and be free of other impairing drugs. Individuals presenting for work outside normal hours, may be permitted to work with a BAC of up to 0.02, following a fitness for work (FFW) self assessment.

5. Who does the standard apply to?

The standard applies to everyone irrespective of their position within the company, and also applies to contractors and sub-contractors carrying out work on behalf of Western Power.

6. Have employees been informed of the new alcohol and drug standard?

Employees were involved in the development of the standard and an extensive education program has been delivered throughout Western Power to more than 2,500 employees and contractors. Employee representatives, including union delegates and officials, have been an important part of this process.

7. How will testing be undertaken?

An independent testing provider will use a breathalyser to test for alcohol and will collect and analyse urine samples for a range of drugs as per the Australian Standard. (See Q 28).

8. What does pre-employment screening, for cause testing and random testing mean?

Pre-employment screening: is designed to ensure candidates meet our standard prior to employment with Western Power.

For cause testing: may be required by a formal leader who believes an employee may be unfit for work. Testing may also be carried out after any significant incident. The purpose of this testing is to support the formal leader to carry out their duty of care in identifying the contributing factors which led to the incident.

Random testing: aims to create an effective deterrent to the inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs.

9. When is 'for cause' testing undertaken?

Testing is arranged as soon as practicable following a significant incident or a formal leader's observation that a person may be unfit.

10. Will post incident testing occur after every single workplace incident?

No. Testing will generally be carried out following significant incidents, at the discretion of the formal leader.

11. Can my formal leader test me any time they want to?

Formal leaders need a reason to require an employee be tested, for example:

- involvement in a significant incident
- observed behaviour, or when others bring attention to an employee's behaviour that is deemed at-risk or inappropriate
- where there is evidence of alcohol or drug use in the workplace.

12. What if I believe that I am being unfairly targeted for testing?

Anyone with concerns about fairness, should raise these with their manager once removed.

13. Do the tests indicate that a person is impaired?

A positive test indicates the presence of alcohol or other drugs in your body. There is reliable evidence to link alcohol and other drugs with a higher risk of incidents. The standard therefore requires you to satisfy that you are free of alcohol and other drugs before you return to work.

14. Why aren't other methods used to directly assess impairment (e.g. saliva or computer testing)?

Saliva testing is in its early stages of development and there has been limited independent testing and is considered unreliable. Similarly, the evidence around computer testing and its effectiveness is limited and is also considered to be unreliable at this stage. These may be considered viable alternatives in the future.

15. What if I believe alcohol or drugs are affecting someone else?

If you have genuine concerns that alcohol or other drugs at work affect a colleague, you should report this to that person's formal leader, or the Western Power contract representative. Alternatively, you can inform your Safety and Health Consultant. Confidentiality will be maintained.

16. How will I be dealt with if I test positive at work?

The purpose of testing is to deter individuals from coming to work affected by alcohol or other drugs. Formal leaders are required to manage individuals in a fair and constructive manner. On the first occasion an individual will be counselled at work and referred for professional assistance. Individuals who repeatedly fail to meet the standard will be subject to disciplinary action.

17. How long does a positive result remain a breach of the standard?

If an employee does not breach the standard for 24 months after a positive test, the individual will be regarded as successfully rehabilitated and any subsequent breach will be treated as a new first positive.

18. Can these tests produce false positive results?

All positive samples are retested using laboratory analysis to eliminate the possibility of false positives. Some over the counter medications can cause a positive result on the initial drug screen. The sample is then tested by a confirmatory test and this will determine if the positive result is due to medication or illegal drugs. This second test will also eliminate medication taken within prescribed limits.

19. If I initiate an alcohol or drug test myself and it is positive, is this a breach of the standard and what will happen to me?

No. You will be asked to leave the workplace and be required to produce a negative test result before returning to work. You will be provided with safe transport. Repeat occurrences of positive self-initiated tests may be managed as a work performance issue.

20. Where can I self test for alcohol and drugs before starting work?

Western Power will make self-test equipment available at no cost. Alternatively, you can self-test at a designated collection point provided by the third party provider. Western Power will cover the cost of these tests.

21. Will I be retested more often if I have a positive test result?

Yes, this is to assist you to stay alcohol and drug free at work and to help your formal leader assess whether the problem has been addressed.

22. Will I be exposed to blood borne illnesses by the testing procedure?

No, all equipment is sterilised and used only once.

23. Will alcohol and drug testing pick up other medical issues that I wish to keep confidential?

No. Only alcohol and drugs specified in the Australian Standard are tested for.

24. Will formal leaders have to assess an individual's fitness to work?

Formal leaders are provided with training and guidelines for this purpose. If a formal leader believes that an individual is not capable of working in a safe and effective manner, they may require him or her to undergo an alcohol and drug test.

25. If someone fails an alcohol and drug test will they lose their job?

If someone fails an alcohol and drug test they will be counselled and offered assistance. Repeated positive tests may ultimately lead to their employment being terminated. However, some behaviour may be so serious as to warrant summary dismissal, for example:

- unauthorised possession or use of alcohol or drugs at work
- the sale or supply of illegal drugs at work
- deliberately avoiding or falsifying an alcohol or drug test

26. What will happen if someone refuses to take a test?

Unfortunately, refusal by an individual to take an alcohol and drug test must be treated as a positive result. The individual will not be entitled to paid leave and will not be permitted to return to work until they have returned a negative test result. An ongoing refusal to test will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

27. This standard did not apply when I joined Western Power. Does it still apply to me?

Yes, it applies to everyone. Western Power embraces its responsibility to set policies and standards to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for everyone. These

policies and standards may change from time to time and all employees are required to abide by them.

28. What do the tests screen for?

Alcohol, benzodiazepines, cannabis, cocaine, amphetamines and opiates.

29. What is a failed test?

A failed test result is one that is above the Australian Standard for the detection of drugs, or a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above the Western Power Standard (i.e. 0.00 BAC for work during normal hours and up to 0.02 BAC at time of response for work outside normal work hours following a Fitness for Work Assessment).

30. What is a Fitness For Work (FFW) Assessment?

A FFW assessment allows individuals to make an informed decision about whether or not they should present for work. It helps the individual to consider a number of risk factors such as recent alcohol and drug use and quality of sleep.

31. Why can't legal driving limits be used at work for alcohol usage?

Research indicates that people may be unfit at levels well below the legal driving limit. This is one reason why provisional drivers and commercial drivers are subject to more stringent standards. For example, any alcohol present at the start of the working day is likely to be a result of heavy drinking the night before. In such instances the individual would be unfit and should not report for work.

32. What if I take legal prescription or over the counter drugs/medication?

It is essential that your formal leader understands if you are taking medication that may impact on your ability to function safely at work. Your treating doctor or pharmacist can advise you regarding this.

33. Will we be permitted to drink alcohol on Western Power sites, e.g. sundowners and team celebrations?

No one is permitted to consume alcohol on Western Power work sites, including Head Office, except in exceptional circumstances with the prior approval of a member of the Executive Committee. The consumption of alcohol may be permitted at a Western Power sponsored event off site, with the prior approval of a member of the Executive Committee. Appropriate control measures must be put in place for any company event where alcohol is to be served.

There may be some circumstances where alcohol is brought to the workplace (e.g. presentation of a bottle of wine as a gift). This is permitted, provided the alcohol is unopened and is removed from site by the responsible person in a timely manner.

34. Am I permitted to drive a Western Power plated vehicle or operate plant or machinery after consuming any alcohol?

Western Power's alcohol and drug standard applies. You cannot drive or operate a Western Power plated vehicle or operate plant or machinery until you have assessed yourself as fit for work.

35. Does this mean that I cannot have a drink after hours if I am on-call or if I am part of a small country depot?

If you are part of an on-call roster or are paid an on-call allowance, then you must hold yourself in readiness for work. This will require you to be fit for work as per the standard.

36. How will privacy be maintained?

Western Power will maintain an individual's privacy with respect to application of this Standard and will keep all information regarding A&D testing confidential, within the limits of the law.

37. Isn't testing an infringement of my civil liberties?

Western Power acknowledges that individuals make lifestyle choices, but in fulfilling its duty of care we must ensure that safety and health is not compromised by the use of alcohol and other drugs.

38. If there is an alcohol and drug problem, shouldn't we test every employee every day?

Random testing aims to promote self management and to act as a deterrent. Research indicates that conducting tests about two to four times per employee per year is most effective.

39. Will the police be told of a positive result on the alcohol and drug test?

No, but police will be informed if a person is in possession of or is distributing drugs on site.

40. Who will keep the results of my test?

The testing provider will keep the results of tests in accordance with the Privacy Act. The Safety and Health Branch Manager will hold a copy of test results. Employees may obtain a copy of their test results on request.

41. What if a formal leader chooses to disclose the test results?

Formal leaders who use information inappropriately will be subject to our disciplinary procedures.

42. What happens to contractors if they refuse to take a test or fail a test?

The person will be refused entry to Western Power sites until they agree to be tested. The contracting company will be advised of the circumstances.

43. How often will random testing take place?

On average employees will be tested two to four times a year. Individuals who test positive may be required to participate in testing more frequently to demonstrate fitness for work, or as part of a fitness for work plan.

44. How can I be sure that the laboratory won't confuse my sample or test results with someone else?

There is comprehensive documentation of all stages in the collection, transport, storage and analysis process. Individuals may also elect to have their sample "split" to enable independent testing at their own cost. These procedures are also audited by the National Australian Testing Authority (NATA) to verify quality control.

45. Will the collector actually watch me pass urine for the test sample?

No. To ensure that the sample is not tampered with you will need to empty pockets, leave bags outside and the toilet facility will have toilet cisterns "blued" and taps secured.

46. What happens if I can't give a sample?

You'll be given water to drink and left until you can produce a sample.

47. Will feedback be given on the results of the testing?

If you return a positive result you will be given a copy of the results and the opportunity to explain the situation to your formal leader. You will also be offered assistance to address any problems.

A summary of results will be periodically provided to the company to help monitor the standard. This will include details of the number of tests conducted, the number of positive results, and the type of drugs detected, without revealing the names of individuals. Feedback will be given to all employees on the operation of the standard in the workplace.

48. Who else knows the test result?

If your test result is positive, Western Power staff that need to know (including your formal leader and Manager once removed) will be informed, in order to effectively manage the situation and ensure your own safety and that of others.

49. What help is available for individuals who may have an alcohol and drug problem?

Counselling and professional help is available through Health Services to address alcohol and drug concerns.

50. If an onsite significant incident occurs will everyone on site be drug/alcohol tested? Or will it only be the employees involved in the incident?

This will be up to the formal leader or incident investigation team to determine. Where a formal leader has reasonable grounds to suspect A&D use (e.g. drug paraphernalia is found) they can request that all employees on the site be tested.

51. If I self-test and I am not fit for work can I request sick leave?

Yes, you can notify your formal leader and claim sick leave or other available leave within the existing provisions. Remember, we are all responsible to be fit for work. Support is available to address any problems you may be facing. However, ongoing absences due to alcohol or other drugs will need to be addressed with your formal leader.

52. How long are records relating to the standard kept on file?

Western Power has a legal obligation to retain employee records for a minimum of seven years following termination. The Privacy Act covers the management of such information. You need to authorise disclosure of personal information to another party.