

# Substance Abuse Testing

Protect Your Workplace and Your Bottom Line



# **SUBSTANCE ABUSE TESTING**

Protect Your Workplace and Your Bottom Line

by

Robert Capwell

*Chief Knowledge Officer*

Mr. Robert E. Capwell is considered one of the leading experts in the background screening industry with over 22 years of experience in the field. As Chief Knowledge Officer at EBI, Mr. Capwell oversees the implementation of process improvement strategies, conducts corporate education sessions for EBI staff members as well as our clientele, and manages EBI's marketing and communication efforts.

The effects of substance abuse in the workplace can be one of the most costly line-items on your income statement, yet because of the complexity of the impact, it often goes unrecognized. Every year employers spend millions of dollars repairing the damage caused by employees abusing drugs and alcohol in the workplace. Costs associated with workplace accidents, lost production, and higher worker's compensation rates have a significant impact on profitability. Couple the direct costs with the indirect impact that employing a substance abuser has on the culture and moral of a workplace and costs surge.

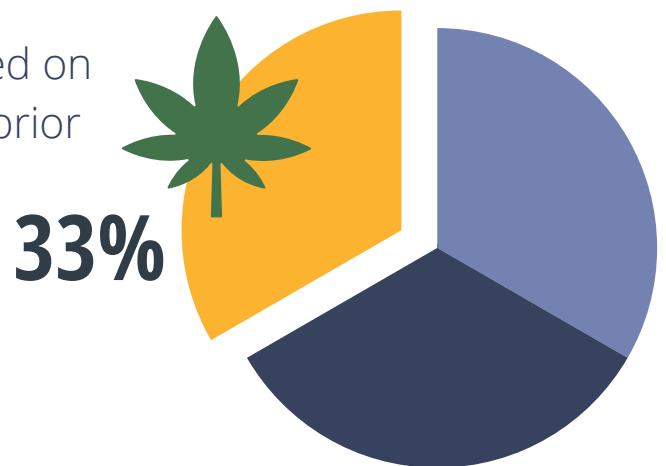
## TROUBLE ON THE JOB

According to a study published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

**74.9%** of the 17.9 million current illicit substance users age 18 and over are employed full or part time.



More than **one third** of employees injured on the job used marijuana just a few hours prior to an accident.



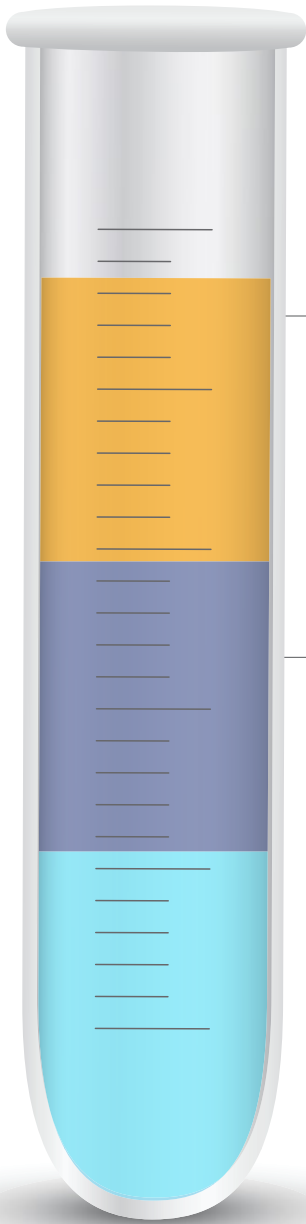


Substance users cause almost **4 times** as many accidents as non-users, and are responsible for up to **40%** of all industrial fatalities each year.

Employees who use illicit substances have been found to work at 67% of total capacity. When you combine that statistic with medical expenses that are 300% higher due to increased insurance premiums and workers compensation exposure, you have added costs that are difficult to ignore. Employers ask, can we really afford employee drug testing? Perhaps the right question is, can we really afford not to test?

## TESTING OPTIONS

There are a variety of testing methodologies available, including urine, oral fluid, hair, nail and blood testing. There are lab-based tests, rapid response testing, regulated (DOT) or non-regulated testing, and a many different options for obtaining the specimen – on site collections, self-collections, Patient Service Center and third party collection sites. The particular need of each employer and the industry they serve will help determine the best testing options. For example, lab-based urine testing is still the most widely used for most employers because of its convenience and accuracy. Employers can provide an applicant with a Chain of Custody Form and send them directly to a clinic for urine collection. They can also use new electronic chain of custody (eCCF) technology to assist them in expediting the drug testing process and providing a positive candidate and employee experience. This well established process has many benefits to employers and donors alike.



## Oral Fluid

Oral fluid testing is a well established technology that provides employers the opportunity to create an “observed self-administered” drug test collection. The process is easily administered after short supervisor training and can be the perfect solution for employers looking for a lab based testing program whose positivity rates often match or exceed that of urine testing.

---

## Hair and Nail

Hair and nail testing, although more expensive than urine and oral fluid, provide employers with expanded view of a donor’s drug use. Although the added expense is not for everyone, employers who have high risk – gaming and safety – often rely on these testing methodologies to provide additional insight into their candidates and employees.

---

## Rapid Screening Technology

Rapid screening technology, or as it is often referred to, “instant testing” is sometimes considered “new” but is, in fact, technology that has stood the test of time over the past three decades of employee drug testing. Although its science is sound and its technology well established, it is not for every employer. State laws and federal regulations must be considered when evaluating the role of rapid response testing. Once an employer confirms that rapid-response testing is allowed, the benefits should be considered before evaluating. Rapid screening technology varies from instrument read technology stored at collections ties throughout the US to inexpensive non-FDA cleared devices available for a fraction of the cost of laboratory based testing solutions. As an employer, it is critical to use an FDA cleared testing device. It is also important to confirm any presumed positive tests with a lab based confirmation technology and Medical Review.

The testing methodologies can also be coupled with mobile drug testing for employers doing large scale random programs or in the event of a job fair. Although expensive, mobile collections are also often critical in the successful management of a post-accident/reasonable suspicion testing program.

Employers whose employees fall under the Department of Transportation (DOT) guidelines may feel that the restrictions of a DOT testing program burden them with costs that are difficult, if not impossible to manage. That assumption can be a costly one. Employers should consider each of the components – from testing methodology to rapid response technology to eCCF and oral fluid technology – and the impact of each on the costs of their drug testing program.

# CONCLUSION

Employee substance abuse testing is complex. As employers evaluate their drug testing program it is critical to partner with a team who understands each of the components, the cost factors and options of each of those components and their ability to control those those costs. A strong discovery process, experienced program design team, and a robust implementation strategy is critical for a successful, cost effective program.

## ABOUT EBI

Employment Background Investigations Inc. works with employers on a global scale to develop and administer comprehensive pre-employment criminal background check programs. We are committed to providing employers and our readers with valuable education and resources on changing legislation, cutting-edge, and compliant solutions to meet federal, state, local, and international mandatory legal guidelines.

EBI is a technology driven innovator and leader in providing domestic and global pre-employment background checks, drug testing, occupational healthcare, and I-9 compliance solutions for employers. With emphasis on business process optimization, EBI services over 5,000 clients in over 200 countries and territories worldwide and specializes in the development, implementation and management of comprehensive and customized pre-employment screening programs for large and multi-national clients.



[www.ebiinc.com](http://www.ebiinc.com)  
800.324.7700