



Can YOU Read the Signs? Impairment in the Workplace

JUNE 2026

LENGTH 2–5 minutes

TO PREPARE Read the background information.

Optional—Use the **Employer Substance Use Cost Calculator** to learn more about how your company is impacted:

- <https://www.nsc.org/forms/substance-use-employer-calculator>

BACKGROUND

*Source: U.S. Bureau
of Labor Statistics*

- Some company leaders think that off-the-job behavior is none of their business, and something that does not impact their bottom line. However, companies may not see the costs associated with lost productivity, absenteeism, and health care costs.
- Substance abusers use three times as many sick days and are five times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim.
- Among callers to a national drug help line, 75% admitted to using drugs while working, and 64% said it adversely affected their job.
- Understanding the signs and symptoms of impairment in the workplace is key for employers.

DISCUSSION

- “Live and let live” is a familiar phrase of advice that makes sense to a lot of people. And most of us are pretty busy at work, right?
- But when employees are driving, it is everyone's business to ensure that they are driving as safely as possible.
- Have you ever wondered if someone you work with shouldn't get behind the wheel?
 - Did you know how to handle the situation, or was it easier to “live and let live?”



TRAFFIC SAFETY Huddle



Which of the following signs and symptoms could be the result of impairment due to alcohol and/or drug use?

- Slower reflexes and reaction time.
- Dulled judgement, reasoning abilities and concentration.
- Increased confusion and anxiety.
- Increased distraction and drowsiness.
- Affected short term memory and tracking ability.
- Blurred vision.
- Hindered maneuvering ability and ability to recognize traffic signals.
- Increased ability to perform amazing magic tricks.



If you decided the first seven descriptions above were valid signs of impairment, then you are correct. Of those seven, could any of these signs and symptoms be caused by something else?

- Definitely. Health problems, sleep disorders or fatigue, family or personal issues can be the cause of some of these signs and symptoms.
- These signs and symptoms as described, regardless of their cause, can impact safety when someone is driving.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Signs of Addiction or Substance Abuse

For a discussion on general signs of addiction, watch a one-minute video available on YouTube:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9mAgaSwhy0>

SUMMARY

- Signs and symptoms of impairment may not be caused by alcohol or drug use, but can still impact driver safety.
- It's important to address these characteristics when they are noticed, rather than take an unnecessary risk.