

“Obviously, people who are responsible for others’ lives should be held to the highest standards of job performance. But urine testing will not help employers do that because it does not detect impairment. If employers in transportation and other industries are really concerned about the public’s safety, they should abandon imperfect urine testing and test performance instead. Computer-assisted impairment tests already exist, and, in fact, have been used by NASA for years on astronauts and test pilots. These tests can actually measure hand-eye coordination and response time, do not invade people’s privacy, and can improve safety far better than drug tests can.”

American Civil Liberties Union

CHOOSE REAL SAFETY

Drug Testing vs. Direct Performance Testing

To try out a Demonstration Alertness Test, go to www.bowles-langley.com.

For more information on drug testing and other drug policy issues, please contact:



Mothers Against Misuse and Abuse

5217 SE 28th Ave, Portland, OR 97202 (503)233-4202 www.mamas.org

MAMA's approach is based on personal responsibility and informed decision making, with respect for human dignity.

- **All the difficulties with Drug Testing are solved if we simply test for actual current alertness.**
- **This is called alertness testing, impairment testing, or direct performance testing.**
- **It is inexpensive, effective, and non-controversial.**

“Impairment Testing is the practice of determining which workers in safety-sensitive positions put themselves and others at risk by directly measuring workers’ current fitness for duty. Urine testing, in contrast, attempts to determine which workers have used specific substances...impairment testing improves safety, is accepted by employees, and is generally superior to urine testing.”

United Kingdom Department of Trade and Industry

Workplace Safety

According to the FDA, there are more than 12,000 prescription drugs and 100,000 over-the-counter drugs in use in America today. Many of these cause side-effects, which can impact job safety.

Antidepressant drugs such as Prozac and Zoloft (SSRIs) have side-effects that include drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision, and tremors. These drugs are used by millions of Americans. Over-the-counter antihistamines- drugs that are used by millions without a prescription- list the following side-effects: drowsiness, dizziness, faintness, disturbed coordination, confusion, restlessness, excitation, tremor, seizures, headache, insomnia, euphoria, blurred vision, hallucinations, disorientation, disturbing dreams, hysteria, and nerve pain.

Performance can be impaired without any substance use. Fatigue is estimated to cause over 100,000 highway accidents associated with 1,500 fatalities per year (*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*). Distractions due to back pain are a major cause of workplace accidents. Emotional and financial distress can also cause temporary impairment.

Drug Testing

Drug testing searches for evidence of a few intoxicating drugs, and ignores the thousands of other possible causes of impairment. A positive drug test does not mean that that person is impaired, or even that the drug itself is present in the body. Urine tests only detect the presence of non-active metabolites, or waste products, of drugs, rather than the drug itself. The impairing effects of marijuana wear off in four hours or less, while metabolites of marijuana can remain in the body for a month or more after use. In contrast, alcohol tests typically detect the active presence of alcohol in the system.

There is no good evidence that drug testing improves work performance such as absenteeism, tardiness, or on-the-job accident rates. Courts have often ruled against drug testing because the employer could not show a connection between testing and job performance. Accurate drug tests are expensive, and inaccurate drug tests lead to legal conflicts and other problems. Because drug testing is not clearly related to performance, many employees view it as an invasion of privacy. It can lead to employee-relation issues, including difficulty in hiring practices, increased grievance rates, and deteriorating labor-management relations.

The safety and efficacy of drug testing have never been proven in controlled F.D.A. studies.

Direct Performance Testing

All of the difficulties with drug testing are solved if we simply test for what concerns us most- actual **current alertness** or its opposite, **impairment**. This is called *impairment testing*, *alertness testing*, or *direct performance testing*.

These tests are simple and come in many forms:

- Highway police use “field impairment tests,” which measure such things as balance (walk a straight line), time distortion (count to 30), eye-hand coordination (remove your license from your wallet), visual cues and speech patterns.
- Computer-administered tests are available over the internet. These tests do not require any special equipment and may be administered on a daily basis. To see a demonstration of one of these tests, visit www.bowles-langley.com.

Advantages of Direct Performance Testing

By testing for actual impairment, alertness tests cover all causes of impairment, whether it is caused by drug use or not.

- They measure actual impairment at the time of the test, rather than traces of past activity. Driving studies have found that drivers testing positive for marijuana have no higher risk of accidents than drug-free drivers (Soderstrom, 2005).
- They can be proven to relate to actual job performance and are supported by the courts.
- They are accepted by advocates of personal rights, such as the ACLU, which means they are less-likely to generate legal or political challenges.
- They do not intrude on employee’s off-the-job privacy.
- They do not suffer from inaccuracy and false positives.
- In a recent national survey of employers who engaged in impairment testing, 87% of survey respondents who had engaged in both urine testing and impairment testing found impairment testing to be more effective than urine testing in increasing workplace safety (*National Workrights Institute*).