Fitness for work - drugs and alcohol

NSW mining and extractives industry

What is included in drugs and alcohol?	Why is it a hazard?	What are the exposure monitoring requirements for the health hazard	What are the health monitoring requirements for the health hazard
This refers to the use of psychoactive substances including alcohol and illicit drugs to a level that may impair normal physical or mental function (World Health Organisation).	The use of alcohol and other drugs can impair or alter memory, concentration, reaction times and mood, which can increase the risk of accidents. In recognition of the risks associated with the use of alcohol and drugs the WHS (M&PS) Regulation 2014[1] imposes a duty on a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) to manage risks to health and safety associated with the consumption of alcohol by workers or the use of drugs by workers[2].	The decision to implement a testing regime for drugs and alcohol should be made in consultation with workers, health and safety representatives and unions. The testing regime should: → form part of a comprehensive program that includes education and counselling → inform workers of relevant testing processes → address confidentially and privacy concerns → give consideration to least invasive method and provide timely results. Testing triggers should include: → voluntary self-testing → random testing → upon reasonable belief → testing after a workplace health and safety incident (Worksafe QLD, 2012).	There are no specific health monitoring requirements in the workplace for alcohol and other drugs. If an individual tested positive and it was determined that the worker had a drug or alcohol problem, then specific health review requirements would be coordinated under the supervision of the specialist health provider providing the rehabilitation services.

[1] Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2014.
[2] Under Schedule 2 clause (1) (b) of the WHS (M&PS) Regs 2014 a health control plan must address the control measures to ensure that workers are fit to carry out work without causing a risk to their own and others safety including control measures for minimising the risk that a worker will be impaired by intoxication by alcohol and other drugs.

Controls for alcohol and other drugs

Workers have a responsibility to present as fit for work. The critical control for managing the risks associated with impaired performance due to drugs or alcohol is preventing access to site if the substance is detected through testing or impairment found on assessment.

As with all risks, the control measures must be developed having regard to the specific risks at the workplace.

Clause 121 (f) of the WHS (M&PS) Regs 2014 requires PCBUs to consult with workers when developing and implementing strategies to protect persons at the mine from any risk to health and safety arising from the consumption of alcohol or use of drugs by any person.

There are a number of arrangements that should be outlined in the policy framework to support the critical control. The policy framework should be developed in consultation with workers and consider:

→ education and awareness

→ drug and alcohol testing

→ management of positive tests

→ prescription medication safeguards

→ disciplinary procedures

→ employee assistance program.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has developed a six-page guide Framework for alcohol and drug management in the workplace that can help to develop a drug and alcohol policy framework for your workplace.

A drug and alcohol policy framework will assist PCBUs to meet their duty to ensure that each worker at the mine or petroleum site is provided with suitable and adequate information, training and instruction about in the implementation of control measures relating to the work being carried out by the worker, including control measures about the consumption of alcohol and the use of drugs.