

Are Your Employees (And Candidates) On Drugs? **The Drug Test Cheating Epidemic: How to Improve** **Safety, Prevent Tragedy, Cut Costs, and Lessen Liability**

by Andy Masters, MA, CSP

As most of us are aware, our country is in the midst of the worst drug and opioid crisis in history. Unfortunately, the impact within our workplaces are much worse than we had ever imagined.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- Overdose deaths at work increased 25% annually from 2013 to 2017.
- Prescription painkiller abuse costs employers almost \$42 Billion annually
- 70% of 14.8 million Americans who use drugs are EMPLOYED.

However, the hidden crisis inside the workplace stems from the nearly \$1 Billion fake “synthetic urine” industry, enabling employees and candidates to easily cheat employer drug tests with a variety of inexpensive and readily accessible products. This is extremely damaging, and has created dangerous ramifications for HR and Safety/Risk professionals, and the drug testing policies and procedures we oversee.

For an average of \$35.00, products such as “UPass”, “Quick Fix”, and “X Stream” are available for purchase, typically at “Smoke Shops”, “Head Shops”, and yes—Truck Stops. These products can otherwise be purchased on the Internet, including several products on Amazon. We must not be naïve. We must understand that employees and candidates *will go to great lengths to cheat our drug test*, to ensure they get or keep a well-paying job.

Based on an average of \$35.00 per unit, with an estimated annual sales of \$1 Billion, a projected 28 million units per year are sold in the United States alone. The ease of such drug test cheating is openly bragged upon via Social Media websites:

“Took the good ol quick fix last thursday. guess whos gotta new job :)”,
boasted “iBry Shuper” on YouTube, one of hundreds of similar comments.

There are even synthetic urine commercials, 100% Money-back guarantees, and a popular review website--which recommends the top drug test cheating products based on performance and cost for each type of drug test (*urine, hair, blood, etc*).

Sadly, top U.S. drug testing companies have admittedly been unable to detect synthetic urine products:

“The cheating industry continues to develop products and systems that may be undetectable in standard urine drug tests.”
– Dr. Barry Sample, Lead Toxicologist, Quest Diagnostics

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In fact, according to Quest Diagnostics, drug test positivity rates were 4.4% in 2018—a decline from 4.8% in 1998--even though drug usage rates (*and drug-related workplace incidents*) have skyrocketed over the same period of time. In other words, U.S. organizations are paying billions of dollars annually for drug testing which is outdated, and admittedly being outsmarted by employees and candidates who are easily cheating their drug tests. This is a source of great frustration, if not anger, by HR and Safety/Risk professionals.

This drug test cheating epidemic has created a dangerous “false sense of security” among HR and Safety/Risk professionals, who believe their organization hires “drug-free” candidates, and has a “drug-free workplace”. The damage is costly, and tragic.

According to the National Safety Council, Employees Using Drugs Are:

- Up to 5 Times more likely to commit violence in the workplace
- Up to 5 Times more likely to be injured on the job
- Up to 5 Times more likely to quit or be fired within one year.

Fortunately, the drug testing industry has finally “caught up”—with new testing reagents for “Specimen Validity Testing” (SVT) which now *successfully tests to detect synthetic urine*. Additional new solutions include updated oral testing, and other onsite products for reasonable suspicion.

After a successful rollout within the hospitals, rehab centers, and the healthcare industry in 2019, successful “synthetic urine” SVT testing will be available for workplace drug testing within many states by January 1, 2020. This is finally a major game-changer in our industry.

Industry Advances Will Enable HR & Safety/Risk Professionals To:

- Reduce Injuries
- Lower Workers Comp Claims
- Prevent Workplace Violence
- Prevent Workplace Tragedy
- Lessen Legal Liability
- Help Individuals Seek Treatment
- Hire Qualified Applicants
- Lower Health Care Costs
- Reduce \$\$\$ Bleeding From Productivity, Turnover, Absenteeism, etc.

It’s time for HR and Safety/Risk professionals to fight back. Be a “Champion of the Cause” to protect your workplace. Amend your drug testing procedures, educate executives within your organization, and help spread the word to other HR and Safety/Risk professionals. Your action not only helps to improve safety, prevent violence, and lessen legal liability, but can also prevent yet another drug-related workforce tragedy in our country.

For additional information and resources, visit <http://WorkforceDrugCrisis.org>.

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About the Author: Andy Masters is an international Author/Speaker who has written 5 books, earned 4 degrees, and presented over 1,000+ programs to 100,000+ attendees—including as keynote speaker for over 75+ HR and Risk/Safety Conferences. Andy earned an M.A.-HR Development at Webster University in Missouri, and achieved the prestigious “CSP” designation of the National Speakers Association (NSA). Visit <http://WorkforceDrugCrisis.org> or email andy@andy-masters.com for program information and schedule availability.

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