

Construction and Mining, Wholesale, Retail Top List of Industries With Problem Drinkers in the Workforce

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The construction and mining fields have the highest percentage of problem drinkers, with nearly one in seven workers having a serious alcohol problem, according to a new ranking of industry-based problem drinking patterns released today by Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems at The George Washington University Medical Center.

Wholesale and retail also top the list. Workers in the three top industries are 25% to 45% more likely to have a serious alcohol problem than the average U.S. worker. By contrast, in government agencies and professional services, such as law, medicine, or architecture, problem drinkers make up a much smaller percentage of the workforce. Problem drinking is defined as having an alcohol dependence disorder or alcohol abuse disorder, terms described in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV-TR.

"The fact is, for every industry, the numbers are too high," said Eric Goplerud, Ph.D., Director of Ensuring Solutions. "Alcohol problems take a tremendous toll on the workplace, and it's in the interest of every workplace to confront the problem and encourage treatment. Treatment works: it saves companies money, and it saves people's lives."

Source: Alcohol Cost Calculator for Business, Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems, 2005.

"Employees with alcohol problems are not likely to leave those problems behind when they come to work, and no business can afford to risk workplace safety by simply hoping they will," said Elena Carr, director of the U.S. Labor Department's Working Partners for an Alcohol- and Drug-Free Workplace (Working Partners) program, in response to the release of the new rankings and the revised Calculator. "Smart employers take steps to protect their business by educating their employees about the dangers of alcohol abuse and encouraging those with problems to seek help before it affects the safety of all. Working Partners is committed to helping employers establish programs to prevent workplace substance abuse."

The rankings, which evaluate the prevalence of problem drinking in 11 industries, are based on the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an annual report produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The rankings are computed using the Alcohol Cost Calculator for Business, a proprietary tool created by Ensuring Solutions.



The Calculator, which can be accessed at <http://www.alcoholcostcalculator.org/>, allows not only for industry-by-industry comparisons, but also industry-specific calculations of the likely impact, including costs, of alcohol problems on any one workplace.

“The Alcohol Cost Calculator for Business is an invaluable tool for businesses seeking to understand the costs, financial and otherwise, of alcohol problems in their workplaces,” said Dorothy Jeffress, Assistant Vice President of Value-Based Purchasing at the National Business Coalition on Health. “Ensuring Solutions' Calculator helps employers understand that offering coverage and expecting high-quality health care for alcohol problems can be cost-effective.”

The Calculator was created to allow businesses and organizations to get a better handle on the prevalence of alcohol problems at their firms, and to encourage employers to help their employees receive treatment through health insurance plans and Employee Assistance Programs.

About Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems

Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems develops authoritative, research-based information and tools on problem drinking, placing them in the hands of business leaders, policy makers, and others working to save lives and money by increasing access to treatment. Ensuring Solutions is based at The George Washington University Medical Center and funded primarily by The Pew Charitable Trusts.