

“What do you mean he passed the drug test?!”

This is the reaction we often get when an employee passes a reasonable suspicion drug test. The employee was clearly impaired; so what went wrong with the drug test? The reality is that there are numerous reasons that an impaired employee will pass a drug test (without cheating). It is important for any business's substance free workplace program to take all of the following possibilities into consideration:

- **He was on a drug that wasn't tested for.** Even the most thorough drug testing program can't test for all possible impairing substances. Here are some commonly abused substances that aren't typically screened for:
 - inhalants (spray paint, whipped cream, gasoline, computer duster spray, other vapors and aerosols)
 - steroids
 - synthetic drugs (synthetic marijuana, bath salts)
 - cough syrup
- **He has an impairing prescription.** Many legitimate prescriptions can cause impairment. If the drug test was sent to an MRO (as it should be), the result will come back as negative if the individual had a valid prescription.
- **He has a medical or mental health condition.** Many medical conditions can mimic drug/alcohol impairment. These include low blood sugar/diabetes, stroke, vertigo, brain tumors and other neurological conditions. The behavior associated with some mental illnesses may also resemble drug/alcohol impairment.
- **Too much or too little time had passed.** If there was a long delay between the ingestion of the substance and the drug test, it may have worked its way out of his system (particularly alcohol). Conversely, if a drug test was performed immediately after the substance was ingested, it may not have had sufficient time to be metabolized and excreted in the urine.

If your workplace has a reasonable suspicion testing drug and alcohol testing program, there need to be policies and procedures in place to account for these possibilities. If not, an impaired worker may continue to pose a safety hazard to the workplace. If you need assistance addressing these possibilities, contact us at www.substancefreeworkplace.com.



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