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## Employers discuss need for workforce alcohol, drug plans

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When Lynn Shelby and John Miguelena started a construction company in Roseburg 30 years ago, they weren't worried about employees being on drugs.

Miguelena told a Workdrugfree Douglas County forum Tuesday that employees became like family. They thought there was trust between employer and employee.

"Everybody knew what was going on except us," Miguelena said.

He said they've had an employee stashing alcohol on job sites where he could get to it without getting caught while working.

They've had an employee walk off a scaffold while carrying a beam due to alcohol consumption.

Shelby & Miguelena Construction does test employees for drugs. The company still does not have a written drug program, however.

Ron Guerra, an attorney with Jordan Schrader Attorneys of Portland, addressed the reasons for businesses of all sizes to have such a plan in place.

"It's part of your hiring process, it's part of your training process, it's part of what you do day in and day out," he said.

Guerra cited a study that said workplace alcohol use and impairment affects 15 percent of the U.S. work force.

"Nineteen million workers, some of which probably work for you," he said.

Guerra said if someone is using drugs or alcohol at work and causes an accident, that person isn't necessarily liable for damages.

"Guess who gets to bite it?" he said. "The employer."

Guerra said employees need to know the consequences of using such substances at work. Employers also have responsibilities.

Guerra said employers need to become familiar with common symptoms of drug use and form a checklist for employees suspected of using drugs on the job.

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### So you know ...

Workdrugfree Douglas County is part of a state program designed to allow employers to help other employers solve work force substance abuse problems.

A number of local businesses were represented at a forum Tuesday. Training sessions, including how to write a drug policy, are tentatively scheduled for the fall.

**Information:** Mimi Bushman at (503) 293-0011, ext. 336 or [www.workdrugfreeoregon.org](http://www.workdrugfreeoregon.org).

Employees also know ways — as easy as looking on the Internet — to try and beat a drug test.

“As employers, you have to be on your toes and smarter,” he said.

Jon McAmis, human resources and training director at Roseburg Forest Products, said some prospective employees that failed a test have asked for a copy of the results.

McAmis said not to give it to them. He has learned that some companies selling products designed to beat drug tests will offer double the money back if their product wasn't successful.

One way job hunters who use drugs find employment is simply by going to places that don't test.

“Believe me, they know who's not drug testing, the drug users do,” McAmis said.

Of the 17.2 million adults classified as drug dependent or abusing drugs in the country, Guerra said, nearly 13 million — 75 percent — are currently employed.

Guerra said fighting those statistics needs to start at the student-level, teaching youth that drugs don't just do harm, they will prevent a user from earning a living.

That can only be done, Guerra said, if employers are willing to implement a drug policy.

“And if you don't have a drug policy,” he said, “they're going to get through the door.”

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