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A SURVEY OF PROGRAMS FOR COMBATTING
ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Loren L. Bush, Jr., CPP

Authorities estimate that alcoholism and drug abuse cost the U.S. industry more than \$24 billion every year. Employees who misuse alcohol and drugs have or cause a dramatic increase in the number and severity of accidents when compared to the remainder of the population. They also are far less effective employees due to absenteeism, tardiness, lowered productivity, and impaired judgment and reasoning ability.

Because of the potential hazards to public health and safety that could be caused by this pervasive problem and because of the increasing trend in reports of drug related incidents at nuclear power plants, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Office of Inspection and Enforcement established a Drug Abuse Task Force to examine the problem. In addition to surveying a selected sample of utilities, the Task Force contacted the Department of Defense, the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, and several other authorities.

I would like to share with you some of the highlights of the Task Force report. Hopefully there are a few useful thoughts for your own program. If you don't have a program as yet, you're not alone. Dr. Barry Brown of the National Institute on Drug Abuse told the Task Force that in 1980 there were 4600 programs in the U.S. industry when there should be over 500,000. Only 57% of the Fortune 500 Companies have programs.

The Task Force reported that there were a variety of philosophies and programs, but many common elements, among the utilities surveyed. The philosophies ranged from the traditional "suppressive" program to the newer concepts of an "assistance" program by encouraging the employees to come forth voluntarily.

Three basic elements are necessary for a program; a corporate policy (written is obviously preferred for legal considerations and superior capability of communicating with employees), employee knowledge of that policy and any related rules and procedures, and corporate resolve to enforce that policy. Since corporate policy is the foundation of the program, it may be useful to examine examples contained in the Task Force report.

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Example of a policy statement concerning work related use or possession:

"To discharge our responsibilities relative to safely operating and maintaining our nuclear stations, it is vital that we take action to protect against the potential adverse influence of any substances which alter mental or physical capacity including, but not limited to, alcoholic beverages or a non-prescribed drug, narcotic, marijuana or other "controlled substance" or "controlled dangerous substance" (as defined by criminal statutes). Accordingly, any (Utility) employee:

1. Found to be using, possessing or under the influence of such substances on the nuclear station site shall be immediately terminated from employment and thereafter denied access to all (Utility) nuclear stations. Provided, however, based upon the circumstances the Company in its sole discretion may reduce the foregoing disciplinary action to not less than two (2) weeks suspension without pay for an employee's first violation of mere possession.
2. Reasonably suspected of using, possessing or being under the influence of such substances on the nuclear station site shall be:
 - a. subject to an immediate and full investigation by Company security personnel, and
 - b. denied access to the Station pending the outcome of the Company's investigation.

In all instances if there is potential criminal violation, the matter shall be reported to the proper law enforcement authorities for their further action."

Example of a policy statement concerning offsite use or possession:

"Employees of the Company are visible and active members of the communities where they live and work. They are inescapably identified with the Company and are expected to represent the firm in a responsible and creditable fashion. The vast majority of our employees reflect credit upon themselves and the Company they represent....

While the Company does not pretend to be judge of individual life styles, employees who use or traffic in any sort of illegal drugs off Company premises are also behaving unacceptably and serious consequences may result. Certain employees perform critical functions in complex and sensitive work assignments in plant or office where alertness and mature judgment are essential. Any such employee known to be using illegal drugs off Company premises will be subject to appropriate action...

In order to protect the best interests of employees and the Company, the Company will take whatever measures are necessary to ascertain if illegal drugs are located on or are being used on its premises. Illegal drug use and its physiological and psychological effects represent a threat to the well being and security of employees and could cause extensive damage to the Company's reputation and community standing. Drug abuse could also instigate the shutdown of vital Company installations were the public

authorities to conclude that operation of these facilities cannot be continued responsibly by Company personnel. Measures used to determine the presence of illegal drugs and/or alcohol, therefore, could include searches or whatever other means are most effective.

These measures may appear harsh, but the Company believes them to be completely justified and necessary. In a time of searching public and governmental vigilance concerning the safe operation of critical utility facilities we must adhere to strict standards of conduct on and off the job if we are to continue to fulfill our responsibility to provide reliable energy services to our customers."

All companies surveyed had some form of a rehabilitation program, usually provided under Workmen's Compensation or the newer concept Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Under the EAP, employees or their families could voluntarily seek confidential assistance, or they could be referred to the program by a supervisor. The employee assistance program is designed to assist an employee (and his family) cope with any problems that could end up affecting work performance or safety. The idea is to help resolve stress inducing situations such as family or marital problems, financial or legal difficulties, etc. Alcohol and drug abuse problems are considered a subset of a spectrum of problems faced by employees and their families. Obviously the earlier that a potential problem is identified and resolved the better. As permissive as the "assistance" philosophy may sound, all companies contacted do not tolerate a lingering problem. In fact the "permissive" program could be considered less tolerant than the more traditional programs because there are a broader range of problems covered. An employee, when referred for counseling by his supervisor for changes in performance or behavior, could jeopardize his job by being unwilling or unable to resolve the problem.

The broad Employee Assistance Programs have been replacing the traditional alcoholism programs at many corporations since the early 1970's. As reported by the Task Force, several factors explain the change:

- EAPs offer a higher level of employee penetration (more employees participate in the program).
- Earlier intervention (many problems manifest themselves off the job before they do on the job).
- Broader scope and less (or no) social stigma.
- Chemically dependent employees are not likely to be referred to any program by supervisors, peers, family, or self if such referral jeopardizes their job or potential for advancement.
- Traditional alcoholism programs are usually regarded by employees as "witch hunts."
- The early-intervention precept of EAP contributes to earlier referral and an opportunity to deal with problems before they show up as a decline in work performance.

- EAPs usually include employee's families as well; this helps with corroboration and motivation when the employee is troubled, and it helps the employee with problems when a member of his family is troubled.

As knowledge and experience in administering these programs are gained, the trend is to make them broader in scope, i.e., placing alcohol and drug abuse programs under employee assistance programs. The next logical broadening step is to conclude that the EAP is really a physical and mental health program, and that if employees are encouraged to achieve and maintain good health, then the probability of alcohol and drug abuse problems is greatly diminished. And why not provide the facilities and staff to encourage good health? This is what the Kimberly-Clark Corporation has done.

Kimberly-Clark, an international manufacturer of paper products, has built a multi-million dollar medical center and physical conditioning facility and provides a medical staff to administer a Health Management Program. The objective of the program is to promote good health, achieve higher productivity, and reduce absenteeism and escalating health care costs. Employees, retirees, and their spouses are eligible for the program which starts with a comprehensive series of health tests and examinations, followed by a prescribed health and exercise program. The employee clearly understands that good health is his responsibility.

The corporation's philosophy on EAP is described in the following policy statements:

"It is the policy of the Corporation

1. That chemical dependency is a progressive health problem which can be successfully treated.
2. That all supervisory personnel will be trained to recognize and understand patterns of job performance deterioration which may be caused by health problems.
3. That the Corporation is concerned with an employee's personal problems only when the employee requests assistance or when the problems affect job performance.
4. That participation in the program will not jeopardize an employee's job security or promotional opportunities.
5. That all records and discussions of personal problems will be handled in a confidential manner, as are other medical records. These records and discussions shall be maintained separate from the employee's personnel file, and as a part of the confidential medical records.
6. That the program is not designed to provide treatment, but rather to provide early identification, motivation, and referral to appropriate resources for further assistance. In addition to this service, a follow-up program will be provided to assist the employee in his recovery when necessary..."

Some interesting statistics were provided by Kimberly-Clark: 33% of the people served were family members; of all referrals 35% were for alcohol/drugs, 27% for behavioral/emotional, 10% for family, 10% for marital, and 18% for other problems. 70% of the alcohol/drug referrals have been successfully rehabilitated; there has been a reduction in absenteeism of 43% and in accident rate of 70%. This program appears to be quite effective and economically justifiable.

Kimberly-Clark has many locations with a relatively small number of employees. Obviously, it would not be very economical to hire a counseling staff for these situations; an agreement is made with existing counseling and assistance services in the particular area. If there are no existing services, agreements are made with local officials and other businesses, and a counseling and assistance service is established for the whole community.

One can debate the legal, moral, and adequacy issues about each of the remaining components of a comprehensive program to combat alcohol and drug and abuse. Without writing a thesis on each, I believe that an effective program should include traditional security measures such as employee screening programs to prevent the hiring of people who may be less trustworthy, stable, or reliable. Employee screening should include comprehensive background checks and psychological tests. Even if not 100% reliable for eliminating undesirable applicants, the obvious potential problem can be removed from further consideration.

Another important component of my effective program would be the detection of alcohol and drug abuse. Elements of detection should include training supervisors in observing quality of job performance and other behaviors; monitoring absenteeism; polygraph tests, searches and the use of chemical tests as allowed by law; and the use of investigators and drug detector dogs.

The complete Task Force report, NUREG-0903, can be obtained from the NRC/GPO Sales Program, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555. Telephone Number (301) 492-9530. Current price is \$4.75.