



### About the National Safety Council:

The National Safety Council saves lives



by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads through leadership, research, education and advocacy. Visit us at [nsc.org](http://nsc.org) for up-to-date industry news, information and tools to take your safety program to the next level.

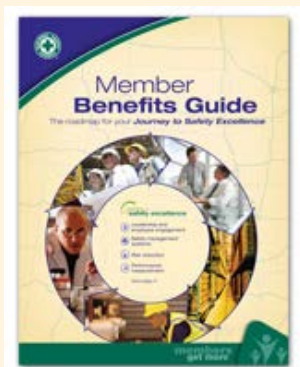
### NSC Safety Awards



Employee engagement is key to a successful safety program! An award from the National Safety Council shows them you appreciate their efforts.

Safety awards from NSC instill employee pride; earn respect from your customers, community and peers; and place you one step ahead of your competition. [Learn more.](#)

### Learn about all the benefits available to you in our new Member Benefits Guide



[See the benefits that are available to you and ALL your employees](#)

### Prescription Drug Employer Kit



The free [Prescription Drug Employer Kit](#) helps employers manage prescription opioid use and misuse in the workplace, and provides an overview of the growing concerns associated with prescription drug abuse.

### Featured Safety Poster



"Take Only as Directed"

Put this [downloadable poster](#) up on the walls at work to remind employees that misuse of prescription drugs is drug abuse.

Welcome to *Spotlight on Safety*, an e-newsletter brought to you by the Department of the Interior Office of Occupational Safety and Health in partnership with the National Safety Council. We hope you will find this service of value. Send feedback or ideas on topics you would like to see to [membershipinfo@nsc.org](mailto:membershipinfo@nsc.org). Please put "Department of the Interior feedback" in the subject line.

### 5-Minute Safety Talk: Understanding Opioid Pain Medications: Know the Risks

Prescription medications are often helpful to patients recovering from injury, but almost every medication has some risk associated with taking it. Being an informed consumer is very important, especially when it comes to opioids. Ask yourself:



- Is there an alternative to prescription opioids that I can take?
- Do I have a family history that might make me more prone to addiction?
- Do I have old prescriptions lying around that I need to get rid of?

This [5-minute Safety Talk](#) offers a number of good reminders you can share with your employees.

### Prescription Pain Meds: These Statistics May Cause Dizziness



A tragic story is playing out in workplaces all over the United States. [Misuse or abuse of prescription pain medicines has reached epidemic proportions.](#) Could any of your co-workers be struggling in silence with an addiction?

#### Addiction's Insidious Path

It can start innocently enough: Legally prescribed drugs are provided by a licensed physician to alleviate pain resulting from an injury. But opioid abuse can escalate very quickly.

Opioids, like morphine and hydrocodone, are now the most widely prescribed pain relievers and the most highly abused prescription drugs. Since the 1990s, the number of deaths involving prescription drug overdose has quadrupled. Forty-five people die every day from overdosing on prescription pain medication, according to Injury Facts 2014, the statistical report on unintentional injuries by the National Safety Council. That's twice the number of deaths from heroin and cocaine, combined.

There are many contributing factors to addiction, but a big one is that opioids are being overprescribed.

In the mid-'90s, [doctors were told they weren't doing enough about pain](#), Dr. Don Teater, medical advisor to the National Safety Council, said in a recent webinar. So, they began to really concentrate on pain treatment. The result was a "huge escalation" in the number of pain pills prescribed, Teater said, as well as an increase in addiction and overdose death.

Opioids are not more effective than non-opioids for most pain, Teater said. Research shows alternatives, such as ibuprofen, can be just as effective.

#### Drug Addiction and the American Worker

One employee with a prescription drug addiction can have an adverse effect on everyone in the workplace, even putting them at risk for serious injury. Imagine intoxicated employees who operate heavy equipment or drive for a living. They are putting others at risk every day due to slowed reaction time, altered judgment and impaired coordination. Even employees who take a regular dose may be too impaired to work in a safety-sensitive position.

As an employer, what can you do?

- Every company should have a comprehensive, up-to-date drug policy on file.
- Employees should be very clear on their responsibility with regard to the policy.
- If an employee must be on a medication that could impair job performance, managers should work with him or her and offer modified job duties.
- Signs of impairment on the job may provide reasonable cause for a drug test.
- Employers should support confidential access to treatment for any employees needing assistance.

[Read more about the role employers play in this guide.](#)

#### NSC is Confronting This Epidemic

National Safety Council considers prescription drug addiction and abuse to be one of the country's most pressing issues. NSC is addressing the problem through education, legislation and working toward the implementation of drug monitoring.

### These Sobering Facts Speak For Themselves

Think about this:

- Unintentional drug overdoses contribute to more deaths each year than motor vehicle crashes. About half of all unintentional overdoses are prescription drug overdoses.
- More than 20 percent of the American workforce has misused prescription painkillers, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
- Every year, more than 16,000 people in the U.S. die from abuse of prescription painkillers.
- The U.S. contains 4.6 percent of the world's population but consumes 80 percent of the world's opioids and 99 percent of the world's hydrocodone.
- More than 2 million people in the U.S. are [addicted to prescription opioids](#), according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.
- Prescription opioid abuse is often a precursor to



heroin use. Four out of five heroin users report starting on prescription pain killers, according to NSC research.

- Nearly 70 percent of people abusing prescription painkillers in 2013 said they got the drugs from a friend or relative.

## Featured Webinar



Visit our [Online Learning Library](#) to view our extensive webinar select. This month's suggested topic:

"Prescription Nation - America's Drug Problem".

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