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News Release

For Immediate Release

Big Surge in Drug and Alcohol Workplace Testing

Figures just released by the New Zealand Drug Detection Agency reveal the number workplace drug tests more than doubled in the past year.

The statistics comparing 2010 with 2009 show that the number of on-site drug tests conducted by NZDDA jumped by 122% from 13,179 in 2009 to 29,315 on site screening tests in 2010.

NZDDA Communications Director Nick McLeay says the increase is largely due to companies realising the benefits of having a drug free workplace.

“Those benefits are largely focused around improving the health and safety of employees and also meeting the legislative requirements. It’s about making sure staff go home to their families in one piece at the end of the day,” says Nick McLeay.

“We’ve seen a big shift to the on-site testing we provide since the new industry standards were introduced in 2008. It’s been really popular with companies because it’s so efficient. We have a result within five minutes, which either allows that worker to go straight back to work or for the company to start taking action immediately.”

NZDDA supply a unique on-site drug testing service – the only one in New Zealand that has received accreditation from International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ). They conduct on-site drug and alcohol testing across a range of industries including manufacturing, forestry, construction, transport, waste, freezing works, mining and oil and gas. The drugs they test for include cannabis, opiates, amphetamine, methamphetamine, cocaine and benzodiazepines.

As a reflection of the growing demand for workplace drug testing, NZDDA has grown from having 2 offices servicing 6 regions in 2008 to 14 offices. Covering 17 regions, and with around 30 specialised mobile testing vehicles.

Nick McLeay says companies are required to take action once they have identified a hazard in the workplace.

“Drugs and alcohol are considered a major hazard and having a Drug and Alcohol Policy that is actively managed by regular testing goes a long way to reducing the hazard and making the workplace safer. The on-site drug and alcohol testing that NZDDA provides allows this vital process to take place with the minimum disruption to both workers and the workplace,” says Nick Mcleay.

NZDDA statistics about the types of drugs workers tested positive for are similar to 2009 with cannabis again topping the list of detected drugs in over 70% of positive tests. Opiates remained in second place with just over 16% and there was a slight fall in Methamphetamine and Amphetamine positive tests.

Nick Mcleay says the latest figures reveal some definite North and South Island trends.

“Overall, the percentage of positive tests revealing THC (Cannabis) is lower in the South Island but there’s a concern in some industries about the high levels of opiates being found in test results. The South Island figure for 2010 at 26% is exactly double that of the North Island result of 13%. We can’t say why this split occurs and it may be due to the use of over-the-counter pain medications such as codeine, but it’s a trend we’ve noticed for the past two years now.”

“The sudden appearance of cocaine is also a new trend, as it’s not a drug traditionally linked with many of the industries we test. It’s only a very small occurrence but it’s gone from no positive tests in 2009 to 0.5% for the South Island in 2010. More disturbing is the fact that half of the cocaine positives were identified when conducting post incident/accident testing, “ says Nick McLeay.

In 2010 NZDDA conducted 13821 breath alcohol tests and had 1.9% of people test positive. This compares to 2009 when NZDDA conducted 5923 breath alcohol tests and had 0.7% of people test positive. The highest level a person recorded for 2010 was 1535 micrograms per litre of breath which is almost 4 times over the legal driving limit of 400 micrograms per litre of breath. This test was conducted at 3.30pm.

Statistics

The table below shows the breakdown of percentages per drug class for those positive tests (2009 = 10% and 2010 = 9%).

Drug	2009 – percentage positive	2010 – percentage positive
Cannabis	69.2%	70.3%
Opiates	16.2%	16.2%
Methamphetamine	7%	6.7%
Amphetamine	5.2%	4.6%
Cocaine	0%	0.2%
Benzodiazepines	2.4%	2%

Regional Breakdown of Drugs being Used

Region 2010	THC	OPI	MAMP	AMP	COC	BZO
Nationally	70.3%	16.2%	6.7%	4.6%	0.2%	2%
Northland	79%	7%	6.7%	6%	0.3%	1%
Auckland	69%	13%	9%	7%	0%	2%
Waikato	68%	15%	9%	7%	0%	1%
Bay of Plenty	74%	10%	8%	6%	1%	1%
Taupo	61%	32%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Eastern	85%	8%	3%	2%	0%	2%
Central	67%	17%	8%	6%	0%	2%
Wellington	81%	11%	4%	3%	0%	1%
Tasman	63%	17%	5%	4%	4%	7%
West Coast	54%	36%	6%	2%	0%	2%
Canterbury	70%	24%	3%	2%	0%	1%
Otago	55%	35%	2%	0%	0%	8%

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Southland	76%	18%	3%	0%	0%	3%
North Island	72%	13%	7%	6%	0.1%	1.9%
South Island	65%	26%	4%	1%	0.5%	3.5%

Region 2009	THC	OPI	MAMP	AMP	COC	BZO
Nationally	69.2%	16.2%	7%	5.2%	0%	2.4%
Northland	87%	4%	5%	4%	0%	0%
Auckland	67%	15%	8%	7%	0%	3%
Waikato	68%	9%	12%	9%	0%	2%
Bay of Plenty	79%	11%	6%	3%	0%	1%
Taupo	71%	24%	2%	0%	0%	3%
Eastern	87%	7%	3%	3%	0%	0%
Central	68%	18%	5%	5%	0%	4%
Wellington	74%	12%	5%	6%	0%	3%
Tasman	-	-	-	-	-	-
West Coast	45%	49%	0%	0%	0%	6%
Canterbury	59%	32%	4%	3%	0%	2%
Otago	74%	22%	2%	0%	0%	2%
Southland	100%	-	-	-	-	-
North Island	70%	14%	8%	6%	0%	2%
South Island	61%	32%	3%	1%	0%	3%

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The New Zealand Drug Detection Agency is the country's leading provider of on-site drug and alcohol testing services. It is the only on-site collecting agency to be accredited by International Accreditation NZ. NZDDA covers 17 regions throughout New Zealand from Northland to Southland. www.nzdda.co.nz