**Five Minutes for Safety**

**Marijuana**

**Objective:** To educate employees on the driving safety and legal aspects Minnesota’s legalization of recreational marijuana use.

**Opening**

On August 1, 2023, Minnesota will join/joined the long list of states making recreational use of marijuana legal. But with legalization comes questions and the need to understand how this affects you here at work and, particularly, when you get behind the wheel.

**Questions for leading the conversation**

This session is about gaining common understanding about the implications of this law. It is not meant for us to learn about your personal behaviors or beliefs. Our top goal is to keep you, your co-workers and others safe in the workplace and to give you insights as to how marijuana affects those who get behind the wheel. We’ll also be covering what the law says about marijuana use and the workplace.

Let’s start with this quiz to test our common understanding of today’s marijuana facts. It’s a little tongue-in-cheek, but there’s a lot of information I certainly didn’t know. You’re welcome to shout out the answers, but if you’re more comfortable, feel free to keep a mental tally. The goal is to be correct about 80% of the time.

Here’s the first question:

1. Out of every 10 people who use marijuana, how many will become addicted? Choose one of the following
2. 0
3. 1
4. 3
5. All 10, in some way.

ANSWER. The correct answer is 1. Research says that about 1 in 10 people who use marijuana may become addicted — and 1 in 6 when use begins before age 18.

1. Which word ISN’T a slang term for marijuana? Choose one of the following:
2. Asparagus
3. Crop dust
4. Christmas tree
5. Thirteen

ANSWER: Correct answer is “crop dust.” There are more than 1,200 names for marijuana. So far, crop dust is the only one we haven’t heard out of this group. But who knows what tomorrow will bring.

1. Can marijuana erase IQ points? (Think carefully!) Choose one
2. Yes
3. No
4. I used to know.

ANSWER: Correct answer is “Yes.” Marijuana use that starts in adolescence can lower your IQ score and permanently erase up to eight IQ points – even if you stop using.

1. The concentration of THC in marijuana has tripled in the last few decades. What does THC stand for? Choose one
2. It doesn’t stand, it falls down a lot (hahahaha).
3. Trihypercannacrystalline
4. Tetrahydrocannabinol
5. Trihypercocannabis

ANSWER: The correct answer is Tetrahydrocannabinol. Current strains of marijuana have much higher levels of THC than your parents experienced 25 years ago. Okay, MAYBE what your parents experienced. The higher levels of THC today may lead to higher rates of addiction.

1. What problems can marijuana cause during pregnancy? Choose one.
2. Lower birth weight.
3. Increased behavioral and attention problems.
4. Preterm birth or stillbirth.
5. Sadly, all of the above and more.

ANSWER: Everyone needs to know the answer to this – all of the above and more. Using marijuana when you’re pregnant can affect your baby’s birth and development. Baby your baby; don’t use marijuana.

1. If a new mom uses marijuana after birth, can it affect her baby? Choose one.
2. Yes – it can contaminate breast milk.
3. Nah, that kid’s good. It’s not like we’re handing him a joint.

ANSWER: The correct answer is “Yes.” Even small amounts of THC can wind up in breast milk and affect a baby’s development. Families, you’re not off the hook either. Studies are being conducted that suggest secondhand smoke from marijuana can affect vulnerable people – like babies!

1. Edibles are a safe way to use marijuana, right? Choose one.
2. Yes, how bad can a brownie be?
3. No, you have no idea how much THC is in that thing.

ANSWER: The answer is No. Edibles are popular, but you can’t be sure about the potency. They also take longer to digest and produce a high, so people might consume more and have a harmful reaction.

1. What could tip the cops off to a high driver? Choose one.
2. A smoke-filled car with its turn signal on for the last 10 miles.
3. Going 25 in a 55-mph zone.
4. Slower reactions, lane weaving, and decreased coordination.
5. All of the above, but especially slower reactions, lane weaving, and decreased coordination.

ANSWER: The correct answer is all of the above. People who drive while high on marijuana can experience dangerous effects that can impair judgement and cause accidents.

1. Our state has okayed marijuana in certain forms. Does that mean it’s legal? Choose one.
2. Heck yeah it is!
3. Legal enough.
4. Um, maybe not.

ANSWER: The answer is “Um, maybe not.” Even though some states are legalizing marijuana, it’s only under certain conditions — which can vary. And marijuana remains illegal at the federal level.

1. Using marijuana can lower the chance that you will (choose one):
2. Finish high school.
3. Attend college.
4. Find success in your career.
5. Get off the couch.

ANSWER: Trick question – all of the above. Research shows that marijuana use can lead to worse education outcomes and lower career achievement, which can lead to reduced life satisfaction.

1. Because marijuana is a natural herb, it doesn’t have health risks. Choose one.
2. Please tell me that’s true.
3. Face it. Natural doesn’t mean safe.

ANSWER: C’mon, you know natural doesn’t mean safe. (Think poison ivy!) Marijuana has short-term and long-term health risks — learn before you burn, eat, or use.

**Messages and Facts**

* The new law legalizes the possession and use of marijuana for Minnesotans 21 and older. It also creates a new state agency, called the Office of Cannabis Management, to manage commercial aspects of the law. The law mandates the expungement of all misdemeanor marijuana and imposes new rules and requirements for hemp-based THC drinks and edibles.
* The law authorizes the production and retail sale of marijuana flower, concentrates, topicals and edible products, such as candy and beverages. It also permits the sale of immature cannabis plants and seeds, as well as hemp-derived THC products.
* Driving while under the influence of this drug is illegal. A person can receive a driving while impaired charge if he or she drives under the influence of marijuana or another controlled substance that can impact his or her brain, muscles, or nervous system.
* Consumption of cannabis will be prohibited anywhere not explicitly authorized by the law. Consuming marijuana products in any form would also be prohibited in motor vehicles, on school property and in state correctional facilities.
* Driving under the influence of cannabis will be a crime. And like the state's open container law for alcohol, it will also be illegal to have an open cannabis product in a vehicle, except in the trunk or a similar area of the vehicle that can't be accessed while driving.
* Except where required by federal law or for a handful of job categories specified in Minnesota statutes, applicants for jobs cannot be screened for marijuana as a condition for employment. Ongoing or random cannabis tests for many employees would also be banned. Companies can ban the possession and use of cannabis during work hours and when an employee is on-site or in a company vehicle. Businesses can also require cannabis testing if on-the-job cannabis use is suspected to be the cause of a violation of company policy or law.
* Employers are not required to permit employee use, possession, or distribution of cannabis products at the workplace. Employers may also prohibit being under the influence at work. These requirements should be in the employer’s policies and the policy should specifically state that being under the influence of cannabis is not permitted. Simply prohibiting “drugs”  or referring to “drug testing” will no longer suffice, because the new law removes cannabis products from the definition of “drug” in certain portions of the statute.

**Company/organization policy review, if applicable**

Review your work-related cannabis-related policies.

**Closing reinforcement**

The bottom line is using marijuana and getting behind the wheel is risky driving behavior and impairs many other functions. Should you chose to use these legal, but impairing substances, it’s your responsibility to make sound decisions that keep yourself and others safe on the road, at work and at home.

**Sources:** Minnesota Network of Employers for Traffic Safety

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration