

Plumbing Industry Drug Free Program – Q&A

The PCA, Plumbing Council, PAMCANI Alliance and PAMCANI Industry Fund believes it is important to regularly remind all signatory contractors (now under the Plumbers Local 130 Collective Bargaining Agreement that covers the 17 county jurisdiction) that they are subject to testing in regards to the “Plumbing Industry Drug Free Alliance”. This subject matter has been addressed and reviewed at PCA and PAMCANI membership meetings; for all Plumbing Council and PAMCANI Industry Fund affiliates (contributing contractors) in our printed newsletter; in the weekly “Workflow” e-mailed (and faxed) news bulletin; through our websites (www.plumbingcouncil.org; www.pamcani.org; www.pcaofchicago.org); and our Plumbing Council “You Tube” channel. If you would like another copy of the drug program booklet mailed or emailed to you, please contact our office and we will immediately fulfill your request.

By now, everyone should have been tested a number of times through the random/ mandatory testing pools. However, many questions regarding this program still arise. So, in an effort to clear up any misperceptions of the drug free program or reasons why anyone might think they are not subject to testing, we asked Screen Safe Vice President of Operations Luci Manos (a regular guest speaker at our PCA and PAMCANI meetings) to answer some of the top questions asked about the program. Here are her responses:

Question: Do support staff and owners have to test since they may not be working in a safety sensitive position that interacts with the public?

Answer: Yes. The CBA covering Local 130 requires random/mandatory drug testing (administered by ScreenSafe, Inc.) for rank & file UA members; union officers and staff; trust fund administrators and staff (including the JAC and all instructors); signatory contractors and their non-bargained staff, and the association staff (PAMCANI, Plumbing Council and PCA). To further clarify the question regarding signatory contractors and their non-bargained staff, the policy includes all maintenance, sales, clerical, management, owners, and part-time employees working 20 or more hours a week.

Q: My secretary is nearly 70 years old. Obviously she is not a candidate for drug testing. Why does she have to be part of the pool?

A: What makes this program so effective is that no one is exempt from testing. Therefore we don’t pre-judge anyone based on their age, race, gender or appearance. Also remember that this program was not instituted to catch and punish; it is meant to identify and help. So if by chance your secretary (or anyone on your staff) is found non-compliant, they will get the support and counseling they need paid for by the money you invest in the industry fund (Employee Assistance Program) and the H&W Fund (Member Assistance Program).

Q: How do the random pools work, because I have been required to test more than one time per cycle?

A: All participants of the Drug Free Program affiliated employers will be subject to the Drug Free Program, and will be tested (urine specimen) at least once, but not limited to one occasion during each 24-month period. Participants will be selected randomly from the 50% pool. The names of selected participants will not be returned to the [50%] pool, so that every two years all employees will have been tested at least once. At the same time all participants will be part of a second pool in which 10% of the participants will be selected for testing each year. Additionally, participants in the 10% pool can be selected for testing at any time even if they have been selected from the 50% or 10% pools, because participants’ names are never removed from the 10% pool. The current cycle is January 1 through December 31 of this year. At the end of each 2 year cycle, the 50% testing pool is completely repopulated with everyone who is part of the plumbing industry (this list is drawn from union members, contractors and their non-bargained staff, union officials and employees, trust fund employees, and association staff).

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Q: What is the correct procedure to follow when the designated staff person at my company (who handles ScreenSafe) is sent a random or mandatory request for one of my former employees to test with ScreenSafe?

A: Do not contact the former employee to have him (or her) tested. Drug testing is for current employees only. If a request ever comes in for a former employee, immediately return the request form back to ScreenSafe and mark the person in the (reason not notified section) as terminated or temporarily laid-off depending on the circumstance. That person will then be taken out of the testing pool.

Q: What levels are being tested and what are they being tested for?

A: ScreenSafe follows federal guidelines for drug testing levels. A positive test will show a 10 panel split specimen with expanded opiates, ph, nitrates, creatinine, and oxidizing adulterants. The panel includes amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine metabolites, methadone, methaqualone, MDA-analogues, opiates, 6-monoacetylmorphine, phencyclidine, propoxyphene. The MDA-analogues and 6-monoacetylmorphine are part of the new standard extended opiate panel, for better testing of morphine, oxycodone and those types of opiates. In addition, all samples are split in half before testing. Therefore, if an employee ever questions the results of the first test, ScreenSafe will test the other original sample at a certified laboratory of the employee's choice (at the expense of the employee) to compare and confirm the results.

Q: I am concerned about confidentiality issues. Who is granted access to my (and/or my employees') test results and how long is the record kept on file?

A: The only people that have access to results for the random program are the following: The Laboratory and ScreenSafe. If the test is anything other than negative it goes to the Medical Review Officer (MRO). If the MRO confirms it is a non-compliance then it is also sent to the Member/Employee Assistance Program (M/EAP). ScreenSafe keeps the results in our system indefinitely, while the actual paper files are kept for 7 years – which exceeds the guidelines mandated by the federal government. Actual paper files are destroyed after 7 years using a shredding company. ScreenSafe also follows all federal guidelines and uses HIPAA regulations for all of our safety and security even though drug testing is not covered under HIPAA. Only the treatment, if necessary, is covered under HIPAA.

Q: What steps do I need to take if any of my employees are deemed to be non-compliant?

A: If you have an employee who is non-compliant, the following things happen: The Contractor is notified by ScreenSafe to remove the participant from the jobsite and to have them contact ScreenSafe. For union members, the Local union is notified by ScreenSafe that the member is non-compliant. When the participant contacts ScreenSafe, we instruct them to contact the M/EAP. Once they contact the M/EAP, everything that happens is between them and the counselors. The only information ScreenSafe receives is if they are compliant or non-compliant (meaning the participant is not following the recommendations from the M/EAP) or they are ready to be returned to work. If they are ready to be returned to work, ScreenSafe sends the participant for a return to duty test. Once we receive a satisfactory result, we notify the Contractor and the Local that the participant is available for work again. The entire process normally takes between 3-5 days, however, the M/EAP will not return a participant unless they feel the participant is safe to return to work, so that can lengthen the time of a participant being out.

To find answers to any other questions you might have about ScreenSafe, Inc. or the "Plumbing Industry Drug Free Alliance Program," please refer directly to the Drug Policy Booklet you received from the association. This booklet is also posted on our website at www.plumbingcouncil.org and you can request additional copies by contacting our office at 630-960-3970 or 312-563-9526. Call us anytime if you have questions or wish to discuss (confidentially if you prefer) any aspect of the drug testing program in detail.