



## Drugs and Alcohol Standard (D&A) (NR/L2/OHS/00120)

### Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be regularly updated as new questions are asked. Please ensure you check back to the D&A [MyConnect page](#) for the latest version. The questions and answers contained within this document apply to all Network Rail colleagues.

#### General

1. **Why are Network Rail randomly testing non-safety critical employees?**  
Everyone who works for Network Rail has a responsibility, in line with our life saving rules, to not drive or work under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Including all colleagues means there is an equal and fair random testing programme and it is safer for everyone.
2. **Why are Network Rail increasing the number of random tests completed each year?**  
The number of positive random D&A tests has been increasing annually. Testing more colleagues each year will act as a stronger deterrent to employees attending work whilst unfit to do so due to D&A and better manage this risk.
3. **When was the standard published and when is the compliance date?**  
The standard was published 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2022 and the compliance date is 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 (6 months compliance period).
4. **Where can I find out more about the standard and the changes?**  
Further information is available on the D&A [sharepoint site](#) or contact [healthandwellness@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:healthandwellness@networkrail.co.uk)

#### Support

1. **I'm concerned I am misusing alcohol or drugs. Can I get help?**  
Yes. See the Drugs and Alcohol Support Programme [guide](#) and [FAQ](#) for further information.
2. **Are there rules around when I can declare a misuse issue?**  
Yes. You must declare:
  - a. Before you start your shift or work – do not come to work then disclose an issue
  - b. Before you are informed you are required to undergo a D&A test

If you declare after either a or b, you fall within the scope of the D&A standard and your line manager could apply a for-cause test. If you have attended work with drugs or alcohol in your body, this could cause a positive test result.
3. **I'm worried or anxious about being tested for drugs and alcohol. Can I get support to talk?**  
Yes. You can contact and declare a misuse issue to the following:
  - I. Your line manager



- II. Network Rail [employee assistance programme](#) (PAM Assist). You can call them on **08081 964 505**, or you can email them at [counsellingteam@pamassist.co.uk](mailto:counsellingteam@pamassist.co.uk) or you can use the webchat option on [www.PAM-assist.co.uk](http://www.PAM-assist.co.uk) (access code is NWR1)

Further support is available from:

- III. Your local trade union health and safety representative  
 IV. Your local HR team  
 V. Central occupational health and wellbeing team via [healthandwellness@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:healthandwellness@networkrail.co.uk)

## Testing

1. **How long will a D&A test take?**  
Approximately 15 minutes
2. **What time of the day and day of the week can D&A testing occur?**  
Testing is scheduled in line with the main shift patterns of employees onsite. Testing can occur 7 days a week, and at night.
3. **Who can carry out a test?**  
Only qualified and independent clinicians employed through our occupational health service provider can carry out testing.
4. **How are alcohol tests conducted?**  
Alcohol tests are carried out using a breathalyser
5. **How are drugs tests conducted?**  
Drugs tests are carried out via providing a urine sample and using Point of Contact Testing (POCT) methodology. POCT uses specific test strips in order to screen for any substances, as listed in section 5.14 of the D&A standard.
6. **What if I cannot provide a urine sample when requested to?**  
You will be requested to stay in the location and will be given 250ml of water every 20 minutes until you feel able to provide a sample. You will be given up to two hours to provide the sample. Too much water could dilute the sample given.
7. **I have a medical condition or for other reasons (e.g. Ramadan) I cannot provide a sample, what happens?**  
You will need to disclose this to the collection officer who can refer to the test to Medical Review Officer who may request an alternative method of testing to be conducted. You are likely to be asked for proof of any medical condition disclosed.
8. **When is a random test required?**  
You can be randomly selected for a test if you are working at a Network Rail workplace on the day that location is randomly selected to be a testing location.
9. **Do I have to attend immediately after being contacted?**  
Yes. Unless there is an exceptional circumstance, in which case you must attend on the same day you are contacted.



**10. What happens if I refuse to attend or leave site before being tested?**

This will be treated as a positive test result, unless there is an exceptional circumstance which has been explained to your line manager.

**11. Where are D&A tests carried out?**

All D&A tests will occur at a Network Rail workplace or an occupational health clinic. Testing is carried out in private both in a secure toilet and room. Only the collection officer will be present in the room (not the toilet) when testing is being undertaken.

**12. Can I be randomly tested whilst working at home?**

No.

**13. Can I be requested to undergo a for-cause or post incident test whilst working at home?**

Yes. On grounds of reasonable suspicion or admission, your line manager can request you attend your closest Network Rail workplace and will arrange safe transport for you. The collection officer will be provided the location details and meet you to perform the test.

**14. What if I cannot leave home to attend a test at a Network Rail site?**

In exceptional circumstances where it is not logistical or practical for an employee to travel to a Network Rail site, yet there is reasonable belief that or admission by the employee they are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, an investigation as per NR/HR/POL/013 Disciplinary Policy and Procedure can commence without a confirmatory drugs and alcohol test result.

**15. I suspect my team mate (or line manager) is working whilst under the influence of D&A but I have no evidence. Can I report it?**

You should report your concerns through Speak Out. Speak Out will ask you if you wish to give them your details, however you don't have to provide these.

Arrangements will then be made for the individuals/teams concerned to undergo D&A testing. No evidence is needed to make the call, as long as it is made in good faith. Be aware that making a deliberately false allegation (malicious) could result in disciplinary action.



## Prescription and over the counter medications; and other substances

### 16. If I am prescribed or take over the counter medications by my doctor, do I need to seek guidance on this?

Yes, if you are in a safety critical role. You need to seek guidance from the medication enquiry line and disclose use to your line manager. Where necessary a risk assessment and occupational health assessment can determine appropriate measures to take at work taking into account any medications.

If you are in a non-safety critical role it is advised you seek guidance from the [medication enquiry line](#) and consider disclosing to your line manager. An occupational health assessment may be required depending on the reason for the medication, type of medication and it's effects.

### 17. Can taking a prescription or over the counter medication cause a non-negative drugs test?

In some cases, yes. It is important you disclose any medications (prescription or over the counter) or any other substances you have taken or had administered within the two weeks prior to the test, to the collection officer at the time of the test. If a non-negative drugs test is recorded, your urine sample will be sent to the laboratory for further analysis. The medical review officer from the laboratory may contact you to discuss any medications or substances disclosed and where necessary request proof of prescription. This information will help the medical review officer determine if the final test result is negative or positive.

### 18. What if I forget to declare at the time of the test, don't know the medication / substance name or don't have my prescription?

The medical review officer will seek clarification when they contact you regarding the laboratory test results. You can submit further information regarding any medications or substances taken within 5 days following a random or for cause test by emailing: [toxex.urinequeries@abbott.com](mailto:toxex.urinequeries@abbott.com)

### 19. Will consuming foods such as poppy seeds or using mouthwash, that contains alcohol, affect the test result?

Some foods and substances may lead to a non-negative. However, where you have declared a substance that has been taken at the time of the test, this will be taken into consideration before reporting the final result.

### 20. Will taking CBD oil and other similar herbal substances affect the result?

Some herbal or therapeutic substances may lead to a non-negative test. However, where you have declared a substance that has been taken at the time of the test, this will be taken into consideration before reporting the final result. It is recommended you follow steps outlined in question 13 of this section if you are either prescribed or before you choose to purchase and use herbal substances, such as CBD oil.



Note some CBD oil products may contain psychoactive components which could affect your safety and that of others. It is not recommended you begin using these products until you have sought appropriate medical advice.

Further information can be found in the medications and drugs test [guide](#).

## Test Results

1. **When and how will I know if the test result is negative?**  
Negative drugs and alcohol test results are provided immediately.
2. **What is a non-negative drugs test?**  
A POCT drugs test which has detected a substance within the urine sample but requires further laboratory analysis to confirm a negative or positive test result. Approximately 5 % of all drugs tests are expected to be non-negative. A non-negative test is not a final result.
3. **What happens to me following a non-negative drugs test?**  
Your line manager will be informed and will suspend you from all duties until the result is provided. A HR case will be raised.
4. **How long do laboratory results take to return?**  
A maximum of 5 working days if the test result is negative  
A maximum of 7 working days if the result is positive.  
During this time period, the 'medical review officer' at the testing provider may contact you to discuss any medications you have declared at the time of the test.
5. **Why will I be suspended following a non-negative drugs test?**  
This is a safety precaution. If an employee has a substance in their system which could affect their safety and colleagues they work with and preventing the employee from working will protect their safety and colleagues they work with.
6. **Will I be paid if I am suspended following recording a non-negative drugs test?**  
Yes, full pay for the period of suspension.
7. **Where can I request a copy of the toxicology report from my D&A test?**  
Following a periodic test you can email a request to Occupational Health: [medicalinconfidenceR@optimahealth.co.uk](mailto:medicalinconfidenceR@optimahealth.co.uk)  
Following a random or for cause test you can email a request to HRSS: [HRAdministrationHRSS@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:HRAdministrationHRSS@networkrail.co.uk)
8. **Where are test results stored?**  
All test results are securely stored on the Sentinel database. See the [D&A privacy policy](#).



## D&A Results Appeals

**1. I want to challenge the D&A test result. Can make an appeal against a D&A test result?**

Yes. All appeals must be submitted and supported by a sponsor, investigating manager, human resources or other responsible manager. See section 17 of the D&A standard

**2. I think the sample I provided has been affected which led to a positive result. Can I request the sample be retested?**

Yes. You can request 'sample B' to be tested at another laboratory. See section 17.4 of the D&A standard. Where there is an associated cost to sample B being tested you will be required to pay the required amount.

**3. If my D&A appeal is successful and my Sentinel suspension is lifted, will I keep my job?**

The disciplinary and investigation process is separate to the D&A appeal process. Whilst the D&A appeal process could find in favour of your appeal and overturn the positive result, the outcome of the disciplinary and investigation process will determine the status of your continued employment with Network Rail. The circumstances around the D&A test, such as following an incident, could be deemed serious enough that disciplinary outcomes are applied.

**4. If my D&A appeal is unsuccessful and the suspension on Sentinel remains, will I lose my job?**

As determined by the disciplinary and investigation processes, in most cases this is the likely outcome. However, there may be situations when this isn't deemed necessary. Irrespective, the Sentinel suspension will remain in place for 5 years.