

AT THE END OF THE WORKDAY, EVERYONE GOES HOME SAFE.

# Prescription Opioid Use in the Workplace

## Toolbox Talk



**IDAHO AGC**  
THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

Opioids have been a hot topic in the United States for some time now, largely because the misuse of them has become problematic. The Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) has declared opioid use/misuse an epidemic in the United States (Prevention). Everyone has heard of opioids, but what are they exactly and what do they do? Are they a good tool that just gets abused, or are there safer alternatives available?

**“The amount of opioids prescribed and sold in the US quadrupled since 1999, but the overall pain reported hasn’t changed.”**

and see why our country is experiencing an epidemic of misuse:

“The amount of opioids prescribed and sold in the US quadrupled since 1999, but the overall amount of pain reported hasn’t changed” (Prevention). They go on to share that “There is insufficient evidence that prescription opioids control chronic pain effectively over the long-term, and there is evidence that other treatments can be

effective with less harm” (Prevention).

Consider the fact that pain reporting has not increased, the quadrupling of opioid prescriptions is staggering. The fact that other treatments can be just as effective yet are not being prescribed is also cause for concern.

While under their influence, opioids cause impairment to normal mind and body functionality. Any substance that impairs your mind or body function should not be taken in the workplace or on the jobsite, as they put your safety and the safety of those around you at risk. It is important to know the common forms of opioids so you do not accidentally take them at work in addition to being aware of col-

leagues taking them and putting people in harm’s way.

### Real World Application:

If you get injured and your physician begins prescribing you an opioid, what should you do? The CDC recommends asking if there are alternative non-opioid medications available or inquiring if other treatments, like behavioral therapy, would be a better option (Prevention). Taking an opioid should be a last resort. If you must take an opioid, ensure you are not doing so in a situation that could put yourself or others at risk (such as when operating machinery or in an environment that requires unimpaired bodily function).

If you are unsure about your company’s policies with opioids, ask about them. Every employee should be familiar with these policies.

### Talking Points:

1. What is our company’s policy regarding opioid use in the workplace?
2. What should I do if opioids are being used in violation of company policy at work?
3. What do I do if I get injured at work?
4. What resources do I have to help with pain management?

