

Ask The Expert: Which Workers Are “Safety-Sensitive”?



QUESTION

Is a teacher a safety-sensitive worker?

ANSWER

Normally, NO; but it could be in unusual circumstances.

EXPLANATION

Cannabis legalization has given new importance to the phrase ‘safety-sensitive.’ Generally, because alcohol and drug testing is so privacy invasive, it’s only justified when the worker being tested has a ‘safety-sensitive’ position, i.e., one that requires a high degree of care and safety and becomes highly dangerous when done by a person who’s impaired. Examples include airline pilots, bus drivers, operators of heavy equipment, workers in mines and other dangerous work environments, etc.

Teachers are NOT ordinarily thought of as safety-sensitive. But teacher could potentially be a safety-sensitive position if they’re assigned special safety-sensitive responsibilities like driving a school van full of kids or being in charge of their safety during a class trip.