

## National Safety Council States That “No Level of Cannabis Use Is Safe Or Acceptable” For Safety-Sensitive Positions

Article By:

Kathryn J. Russo

---

The National Safety Council, a nonprofit organization whose stated mission is to eliminate preventable deaths at work, in homes and communities through leadership, research, education and advocacy, published a [Position/Policy Statement](#) on October 21, 2019 addressing cannabis (marijuana) impairment in safety-sensitive positions. NSC stated that “it is clear that cannabis impacts psychomotor skills and cognitive ability,” and concluded that “there is no level of cannabis use that is safe or acceptable for employees who work in safety-sensitive positions.” (“Safety-sensitive” refers to jobs that impact the safety of the employee and the safety of others as a result of performing that job).

NSC stated that cannabis is the most widely consumed illicit substance worldwide. According to a 2018 study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, employees who tested positive for cannabis had:

- 55% more industrial incidents
- 85% more injuries
- 75% greater absenteeism compared to those who tested negative.

Noting that cannabis affects the body in a number of ways including disorientation, impaired judgment, lack of concentration, slowed fine motor skills and delayed decision-making, among others, NSC supports moving employees to non-safety-sensitive positions when they use marijuana for medical reasons. *[We recommend consulting with counsel before doing so to ensure compliance with applicable laws].*

While also noting that more research is needed to better understand the effects of cannabis, NSC stated that there is evidence that legalization or decriminalization of marijuana may increase vehicle crash rates and hospitalizations. It cited a Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area study that found the yearly rate of emergency department visits related to marijuana increased 52% after the legalization of recreational marijuana in Colorado. Another study done by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety examined 2012-2016 police-reported crashes before and after the retail sales of

cannabis began in Colorado, Oregon, and Washington. That study estimated that those three states combined saw a 5.2% increase in the rate of crashes per million vehicle registrations, compared with neighboring states that did not decriminalize or legalize marijuana sales. In 2017, the NSC Alcohol, Drug and Impairment Division issued a position statement concluding that cannabis degrades driving performance.

Although NSC acknowledged that the amount of THC detectable in the body does not directly correlate to a degree of impairment, NSC believes that it is unsafe to be under the influence of cannabis while working in a safety-sensitive position due to the increased risk of injury or death to the operator and others.

Jackson Lewis P.C. © 2024

---

National Law Review, Volumess IX, Number 296

Source URL: <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/national-safety-council-states-no-level-cannabis-use-safe-or-acceptable-safety>