

# EMPLOYERS and BUSINESSES FAST FACTS on Marijuana Risks

## TODAY's Marijuana is a Powerful Drug

THC is the mind-altering chemical found in marijuana. THC changes the way a person's brain works.<sup>9</sup>

### What are some signs of marijuana drug use?<sup>9</sup>

- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Red eyes
- Dry mouth
- Decreased coordination
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Slowed reaction time
- Paranoid thinking

## Worker Productivity and Safety

### Problems:

Workers who smoke marijuana are more likely to experience tardiness, accidents, workers' compensation claims, job turnover and a 75% increase in absenteeism.<sup>1</sup>

### Accidents:

Workers who test positive for marijuana use have 55% more industrial accidents and 85% more injuries.<sup>1</sup>

### Impairment:

The drug marijuana impairs short-term memory, attention, judgment, cognitive functions, coordination, balance, increases heart rate and can cause psychotic episodes.<sup>2</sup>

### How long does marijuana impairment last?

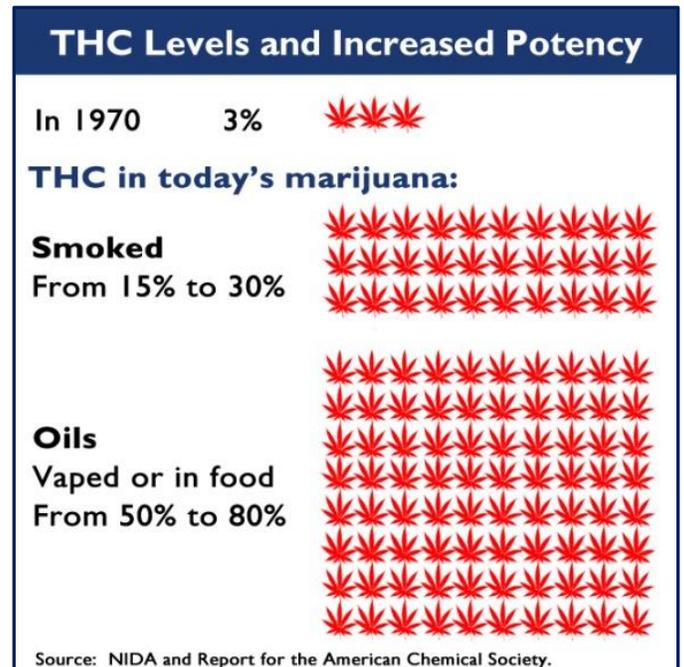
Impairment can last 24 hours or more. In one study nine pilots flew in an aircraft simulator prior to smoking, 15 minutes after using marijuana and again 4, 8 and 24 hours after smoking what was considered to be a moderate dose of marijuana. Seven pilots showed some degree of impairment 24 hours after smoking.<sup>3</sup>

## Job Performance Risks

**Health risks:** Heavy marijuana abusers self-reported that their use had negative effects on their cognitive abilities, career status, social life and physical and mental health.<sup>4</sup>

**Illness:** According to the National Council of Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc., marijuana smokers may have a daily cough, more frequent acute chest illness, and a heightened risk of lung infections, which can lead to employees taking time off of work.

**Driving risks:** Because marijuana impairs judgment and motor coordination and slows reaction time, an intoxicated person has an increased chance of being involved in or responsible for an accident.<sup>5,6</sup> Fatal car crashes that involved marijuana tripled in the past decade.<sup>7</sup> The 2014 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers reports that drivers with marijuana in their system grew by nearly 50%.<sup>8</sup>



- 1 Zwerling C, Ryan J, Orav EJ. "The efficacy of pre-employment drug screening for marijuana and cocaine in predicting employment outcome." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 264(20): 2639-2643, 1990.
- 2 <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/how-does-marijuana-use-affect-your-brain-body> July, 2012.
- 3 Leirer VO1, Yesavage JA, Morrow DG. Marijuana carry-over effects on aircraft pilot performance. *Aviat Space Environ Med.* 1991 Mar;62(3):221-7.
- 4 Gruber AJ, Pope HG, Hudson JI, et al. Attributes of long-term heavy cannabis users: A case control study. *Psychological Medicine* 33(8): 1415-1422, 2003.
- 5 O'Malley, P.M., and Johnston, L.D. Drugs and driving by American high school seniors, 2001–2006. *J Stud Alcohol Drugs* 68(6):834–842, 2007.
- 6 Richer, I., and Bergeron, J. Driving under the influence of cannabis: Links with dangerous driving, psychological predictors, and accident involvement. *Accid Anal Prev* 41 (2):299–307, 2009.
- 7 Brady, Joanne E. and Li, Guohua. Trends in Alcohol and Other Drugs Detected in Fatally Injured Drivers in the United States, 1999–2010. *Am. J. Epidemiol.* (2014) 179 (6): 692-699. doi: 10.1093/aje/kwt327
- 8 <http://www.nhtsa.gov/About+NHTSA/Press+Releases/2015/nhtsa-releases-2-impaired-driving-studies-02-2015>
- 9 National Institute on Drug Abuse NIDA.gov