

New Stricter Drug Driving Law Starts in March

On 2 March 2015, the government's new, stricter drug driving law goes into effect in England and Wales. The law enforces limits for 16 different drugs—eight that are generally prescribed, eight that are illegal—in an effort to lower the estimated 200 drug driving-related UK deaths that occur each year. These new restrictions will affect about 19 million prescription users a year, according to the Department for Transport, and will have serious consequences for anyone who flouts the law.

Testing Methods and Consequences

If individuals are suspected of driving while under the influence, they will be given an oral swab drug test in order to identify the chemicals present in their saliva. If the test results surpass the new law's drug limits, drivers may be asked to provide a blood sample to confirm the initial test's findings.

Drivers exhibiting any traces of the 16 drugs above the new limits could receive one, all or a combination of the following punishments: a maximum of one year in prison, a fine of up to £5,000, and/or a minimum one-year driving ban.

The tests only detect abnormal amounts of the drugs in an individual's system. Passive (such as accidental inhalation of marijuana smoke at a party) or prescribed use is not expected to yield a positive test result—the limits on illicit drugs have been set at the lowest possible levels to rule out accidental exposure. Still, the government recommends that drivers carry confirmation of their prescriptions.

How the New Law Affects Your Business

If your employees are required to drive for work or if they use company cars, you could be held liable for any injuries or damage they cause while driving under the influence. Other common products such as over-the-counter drugs could also test positive if an individual is

not careful. Therefore, it is critical that you communicate this information to each employee, and conduct a routine background check and drug test for all employees who will be operating a company vehicle. Below is the list of the 16 drugs outlined in the law:

Generally Prescription Drugs Used to Treat:

- Anxiety (flunitrazepam, diazepam, clonazepam, lorazepam, oxazepam, temazepam)
- Extreme pain (morphine)
- Drug addiction (methadone)

Illicit Drugs

1. Benzoylcegonine
2. Cocaine
3. Cannabis
4. Ketamine
5. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD)
6. Methylamphetamine
7. Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA-Ecstasy)
8. Heroin and diamorphine

Drive Safe, Drive Smart

The new law imposes stricter regulations and higher penalties that make it easier to arrest drivers who are taking illegal drugs or abusing prescription drugs. Encourage employees to review their prescription drug regimens and to consult the law's new drug limits. For more detailed information on the law's drug limits, click here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-approval-for-driving-limits-for-16-drugs>.

