



## Fatal Drug Overdose in the Workplace

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS:

- Develop recovery-friendly workplace policies and offer information, screenings, resources, and referrals for workers at risk for substance use disorders. Ensure treatment, accommodations, and return to work supports are available when needed.
- Identify local community resources for substance use disorder treatment and recovery support through contact with local health departments and other providers.
- Maintain naloxone in multiple areas of the workplace to reverse opioid overdoses and collaborate with local health departments to train employees on administration of naloxone. Call 911 immediately for any suspected overdose.

### What is the hazard?

In 2020 the Kentucky Fatality Assessment Control Evaluation program recorded 12 workplace drug overdose fatalities-the highest number since its inception in 1994. This alarming trend continued into 2021 with 18 drug overdose fatalities occurring in Kentucky workplaces, which was three times higher than the number recorded in 2019. The number of workplace overdoses decreased to 7 in 2022.

### The following worker deaths due to drug overdose occurred in Kentucky:

Case 1: A 41 year old male was working as a contract vendor and stagehand at a regional music festival. Overnight, a member of the festival staff found the man unresponsive within a working zone. EMS was immediately dispatched and confirmed the death as an accidental overdose. The cause of death was fentanyl intoxication. (2021)

Case 2: A 19-year-old female was employed as a temporary employee at a freight warehouse. She was found unconscious outside of the workplace while on a break. EMS arrived and administered naloxone. She was unable to be resuscitated. She had a history of opioid use. The cause of death was fentanyl intoxication. (2020)

Case 3: A 28-year-old male and out-of-state resident was a truck driver for a transportation company. He pulled off of the roadway onto a highway exit ramp and overdosed. The cause of death was fentanyl and ethanol intoxication. (2020)

Case 4: A 44-year-old male was a shipping manager at a construction supply company. He had a history of substance use disorder treatment. He was found unresponsive in the back of a truck at the company site. EMS transported the man to a healthcare facility, but he was unable to be resuscitated. The cause of death was methamphetamine intoxication. (2020)

# FURTHER RESOURCES

Name of Resource	Resource Description	Resource Link
Recovery-Ready Workplace Resource Hub	Department of Labor website providing info and resources about recovery-ready workplace policies and practices.	<a href="https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/RRW-hub">https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/RRW-hub</a>
Workplace Supported Recovery Program	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) workplace approaches to improving treatment and recovery at work.	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/opioids/wsrp/default.html">https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/opioids/wsrp/default.html</a>
Using Naloxone to Reverse Opioid Overdose in the Workplace: Information for Employers and Workers	NIOSH guidance for naloxone use in workplaces. Includes information on obtaining and storing naloxone and training staff for use.	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2019-101/default.html">https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2019-101/default.html</a>
Kentucky Small Business Toolkit for Hiring Employees in Recovery	A toolkit providing info and resources to assist small businesses in hiring employees in recovery.	<a href="https://kiprc.uky.edu/programs/kentucky-occupational-safety-and-health-surveillance-koshs-program/training-tools/kentucky-small-business-toolkit">https://kiprc.uky.edu/programs/kentucky-occupational-safety-and-health-surveillance-koshs-program/training-tools/kentucky-small-business-toolkit</a>
Kentucky Transformational Employment Program	Resources for Kentucky employers regarding employees in recovery and creating a recovery-friendly workplace.	<a href="https://kentuckycomeback.com/KTEP/">https://kentuckycomeback.com/KTEP/</a>
FindHelpNOWKY.org	Online directory of Kentucky addiction treatment facilities with up-to-date availability information.	<a href="https://findhelpnowky.org/ky">https://findhelpnowky.org/ky</a>



## CONTACT KOSHS

2365 Harrodsburg Road  
 Southcreek Building B, Suite B475  
 Lexington, Kentucky 40504  
 (859)-323-4750 office  
 kyfaceprogram@uky.edu  
 Join our mailing list: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/R3mbvyZ>



@KOSHSNews



@KOSHSNews

## Acknowledgements

Produced by the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Surveillance (KOSHS) Program, Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC) as bona fide agent for the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

The KOSHS Program is funded by grant 5 U60OH008483-18-00 from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



**Kentucky Public Health**

Prevent. Promote. Protect.