

# Comfort ZONE

## Impaired workers are nothing to sneeze at!

As we enter the cold and flu season, many employees will either be missing work or taking medication to try and struggle through their shift. Many over-the-counter cold and flu medications contain a warning not to drive or operate machinery while taking the medication. The



problem is people either don't read the warnings or simply ignore them.

### *Higher Risk Than Narcotics*

There is evidence these "first generation" antihistamines found in cold remedy medications not only cause drowsiness, but may cause delayed reaction times, difficulty focusing on tasks and decreased memory. Studies show these effects can be present even though the person does not feel "drowsy".

### *More Impairing Than Alcohol*

A study at the University of Iowa tested people in a driving simulator. They were given 60 mg. of diphenhydramine, which is a common ingredient in over-the-counter antihistamines. On another day subjects were given enough alcohol to produce a blood alcohol content of .1. The legal limit is .08 in Canada.

The subjects were then tested in the driving simulator. What the researchers found was

after the diphenhydramine the drivers were more impaired than after the alcohol. Their ability to steer and stay in the proper lane was significantly worse even though they did not necessarily feel drowsy.

If you are going to take medication and go to work, it is important you read the label.

Always follow the recommended dosages. Taking more than is recommended will not help you feel better faster and may increase the risk of an incident.

Ask your pharmacist to recommend a medicine that will not produce undesirable side effects.

Remember some cough medicines contain significant amounts of alcohol.

Ask your staff to let you know they are taking medication. You may be able to change their assignment to something less hazardous.

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