

COAA Position Statement on Marijuana & Workplace Safety Backgrounder

'The Canadian Model for Providing a Safe Workplace' was first published in 1999 to establish guidelines for companies to manage the safety risks posed by inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs, while respecting the dignity and privacy of all workers. The latest update of the Canadian Model (Version 6.0) was published in July 2018. Each update is subjected to formal legal and medical reviews to assure the model policy is aligned with the latest jurisprudence and medical practices relevant to drug and alcohol testing and addictions treatment. The Canadian Model presently stipulates maximum allowable levels of marijuana metabolites (both urine and saliva maxima) at levels for which there is acceptably low risk of residual impairment.

Since inception, the Canadian Model has followed the lead of the US DOT in setting the drug panel maxima, due to their extensive scientific resources and robust methodology for setting regulations. At present the DOT does not appear to be making any moves to adjust marijuana criteria, notwithstanding legalization in several states in the past few years. The Canadian Model Committee will continue to monitor developments.

The Canadian Model also states as part of the A&D Work Rule: "An employee shall not ... report to work or work ... while the employee's ability to perform his or her duties is adversely affected because of the use of alcohol and/or drugs, whether prescription drugs or non-prescription drugs, lawful or unlawful." The overarching principle of the Canadian Model is that workers as well as supervisors and companies are responsible for ensuring that fellow workers are not placed at unacceptable risk due to potential impairment, whether from cocaine, marijuana or prescription pain medication.

In the absence of new science-based evidence on marijuana use and attendant risks of workplace impairment, there is no rationale to change either the drug panel maxima or the overarching principle upon the legalization of marijuana in Canada.

The societal discourse about marijuana risks is clouded by the proliferation of myths and misunderstandings about "Mary Jane" and its physiological effects. For an authoritative review of marijuana facts, see the paper by Dr. Brendan Adams, posted on the CLR-A website: <https://clra.org/p/marijuana+and+the+safety+sensitive+worker>.