



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Rural Transit Providers



Document This: Rx/OTC Drugs and Accidents

by Ira Allen

As we all know, even medications that are obtained and used legally can play a role in causing accidents or worsening their effects. Because of this, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) encourages transit systems to develop policy on the use of prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) medication, and to develop a training program to help implement that policy. This helps reduce the likelihood that medication will contribute to an accident. But on the other side of the fence—during the post-accident investigation—the possibility that Rx/OTC drugs played a role still needs to be considered.

Any time an initial accident investigation indicates that Rx or OTC drugs could be a contributing factor to the accident, documentation is necessary. The employee's supervisor or the investigator should document any information provided about medication. The agency manager should follow up by soliciting additional information from the employee, including answers to the questions in the box at right.

If the employee is unable to answer these questions, you may need to seek out the answers yourself, if legally advisable. The procedures used to collect this information should be well-defined and institutionalized in your agency's post-accident investigation and follow-up procedures. These procedures need to be sufficient to determine the nature and extent of a

Ask your employees these questions if they have been involved in an accident and Rx or OTC drugs may been a contributing factor:

—What prescription or over-the-counter medications have you taken within the past seven days?

—What are the active ingredients?

—What are the dosage directions (amount and frequency), and what was your dosage practice (amount and frequency)?

—What was the time and amount of your last dose prior to the accident, and what was the time and amount of the dose before that last one?

—How often have you used the medication in the past seven days?

—How long have you been taking the medicine?

—What is the expiration date?

—What warning labels are there, if any?

—For whom was the prescription written? (if applicable)

—What side effects have you experienced? When did they appear/disappear?

—What is the prescribing medical practitioner's name? Did s/he discuss the use and potential side effects of your medication, and can this be verified? Was s/he aware of your safety-sensitive job duties?

—Where did you purchase the medication, and what is the pharmacist's name? (if applicable) Did s/he discuss potential side effects of this medication with you? Can this be verified? Was s/he aware of your sensitive job duties?

—Is there any way to verify the prescription?

causal relationship between medication use and the precipitation and severity of the accident. Naturally, they should also be capable of documenting any agency Rx/OTC policy violations.

Keep all information obtained from this process in strictest confidence and treat it as a medical record. You

should also, however, make it available to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and FTA as part of an ongoing accident investigation. For further information on this topic, consult the relatively new FTA publication, *Prescription and Over-The-Counter Medication Toolkit*. This is

available from the FTA website, at <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov>, or can be ordered in print by contacting Ms. Alison Thompson at thompsona@volpe.dot.gov or by fax at (627) 494-2684. Additional information is available by contacting Sandy Flickinger, Kansas Department of Transportation Drug/Alcohol Manager, at sandyf@ksdot.org or (785) 368-7091.

Adapted from “Documenting Rx/OTC Involvement in Accidents” in *FTA Drug and Alcohol Regulation Updates*, Summer 2003, Issue 25.

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