

What is the hazard?

In 2020 the Kentucky Fatality Assessment Control Evaluation program recorded the highest number of workplace drug overdose fatalities since its inception in 1994. The alarming trend has continued into 2021, with eight drug overdose deaths occurring from January to June.

Kentucky residents saw an overall increase in fatal drug overdoses of 49% from 2019 to 2020.¹



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

Case 1: A 38-year-old male was hired as a day laborer for a commercial property renovation. Co-workers reported last seeing him at 10:00 AM. He was found deceased in an adjacent vacant apartment at 12:48 PM. He had a history of opioid use and recent residential substance use disorder treatment. The cause of death was fentanyl intoxication.

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.

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.

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.

Recommendations for employers on fatal drug overdose in the workplace:

- 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.

Additional Resources

Name of Resource	Resource Description	Resource Link
Using Naloxone to Reverse Opioid Overdose in the Workplace: Information for Employers and Workers	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) guidance for naloxone use in workplaces. Includes information on obtaining and storing naloxone and training staff for use.	https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2019-101/default.html
Kentucky Transformational Employment Program	Resources for Kentucky employers regarding employees in recovery and creating a recovery-friendly workplace.	https://kentuckycomeback.com/KTEP/
FindHelpNowKY.org	Online directory of Kentucky addiction treatment facilities with up-to-date availability information.	https://findhelpnowky.org/ky
Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC), Drug Overdose Prevention Programs	KIPRC's drug overdose program page, includes Kentucky-specific data and reports.	https://kiprc.uky.edu/injury-focus-areas/drug-overdose-prevention
Workplace Solutions: Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Opioid Use Disorder	NIOSH guidance for employers regarding workers with opioid use disorder and general MAT information.	https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/wp-solutions/2019-133/default.html
Workplace Supported Recovery Program	NIOSH workplace policy and program approaches to improving treatment and recovery at work.	https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/opioids/wsrp/default.html
Medications for Opioid Use Disorder for Healthcare and Addiction Professionals, Policymakers, Patients, and Families	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) guide to medications used in the treatment of opioid use disorder.	https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TIP-63-Medications-for-Opioid-Use-Disorder-Full-Document/PEP21-02-01-002

For additional training materials and information regarding the KOSHS program, please visit the program website at:

<https://kiprc.uky.edu/injury-focus-areas/occupational-safety-and-health>.

Let us know what you think about this alert. Click [here](#) to complete our brief, anonymous survey.

Kentucky Occupational Safety & Health Surveillance Program (KOSHS)

333 Waller Avenue Suite, 242, Lexington, KY 40504

Toll Free: 800-204-3223 | Local: 859-257-5839

Email: kyfaceprogram@uky.edu

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/KOSHSNews>

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