



Are you concerned about your boss/supervisor/manager?

No one is immune to alcohol or substance abuse problems, and that includes those who may manage or supervise other workers. Workplace dynamics and power structures make navigating this situation a challenge.

As a worker you may notice that a supervisor has had attendance problems, difficulty performing work, appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or even exhibits unsafe behaviors. You might find yourself “covering” for someone who’s work is affected by their alcohol or substance use. How to handle this situation is unique in every case.

A few basic guidelines:

1. If an unsafe workplace exists:

You must speak to someone in charge or take action immediately. This is especially true in our industry where rigging, scenery, stage automation, and electrical systems can create special hazards.

2. If your supervisor’s drinking or drug use is impacting your ability to do your job, or you find they often do not remember things:

Be sure to get as much of your interaction with your supervisor in writing as possible. Email requests for time off or to purchase equipment or supplies, take written notes at meetings, ask that unusual tasks you are asked to do be documented in an email, etc.

3. If you find yourself in a compromised position of covering for another person:

- a. Documentation is key for multiple reasons: it will help you remember specifics rather than making general claims, and you will have a paper trail. Document the actions that were required of you to cover for the other person. Try to note the date, time, location, and the names of anyone else who witnessed the behavior. Note the situation and describe what you observed and what you had to do to cover for them. You could even email your notes to a trusted friend to be safely kept
- b. Talk to someone else in the organization in a position of responsibility about the situation and present your documentation. Be sure to stick only to the facts you observed and the notes that you took. Don’t accuse or be judgmental. Offer objective concerns and observations.

4. If you are concerned about the well-being of a supervisor:

- a. Create written documentation of what you have observed and include dates, times, witnesses, and signs of misuse. Be sure to note if the behavior can impact safety or impacts the organization/union in a negative way.
- b. Figure out who to speak to and how to approach the problem. Find out if there is an HR rep, another supervisor/manager, crew head or business agent you can speak with. Try to get someone who was a witness to accompany you. Stick only to the facts you observed and notes you took, and document any conversations you have in which you express concerns about someone.

5. If you are concerned about retaliation for reporting someone:

Find out if the organization/union has a policy in place that prevents retaliation and what documentation is needed to file a complaint as well as any available state or local protections. Document any instances of retaliation.