



MEMBERS' BULLETIN

RAIL TRAM AND BUS UNION

Bulletin No: 9/2010

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To: All RTBU Members

RTBU RESPONSE TO MEDIA ATTACKS ON RTBU MEMBERS

The RTBU was again astounded by a disgraceful attack on RTBU Members by the Daily Telegraph in an attempt to whip up a story on a subject as serious as drugs and alcohol in the workplace. We have responded to this latest attack in the following letter to the Editor of the Daily Telegraph.

Tests have caught 180 train Workers under the influence of Drugs

On behalf of Rail workers under annual attack from your paper in relation to the results of the annual audit of safety conducted by the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator (ITSSR), I offer the following:

While it is true that approximately 180 positive drug tests were found on the rail network in the 08-09 year, it should be pointed out that this represents less than 2 per cent of 10,900 random drug tests on rail workers during that year.

Furthermore, over 70 per cent of the positive test results were for prescribed medications. Even common painkillers such as Nurofen Plus show up as positive results in these tests.

Rail workers get sick just like everyone else, and are entitled to get medical help like everyone else.

Nevertheless, the issue of illegal drugs and alcohol use is taken very seriously in the rail and public transport industries and a rigorous testing regime is in place.

The testing regime used by the rail operators includes the use of Random Urine Testing for alcohol & drugs in the employees system in the first instance, clearly if the first urine test returns a positive result, the person is immediately removed from safeworking duties.

Follow up laboratory testing of the sample (which may include blood) then occurs and in the case of drug testing the vast majority of these are returned immediately to normal duty because it is clear that prescription medicines were detected.

When genuine breaches occur staff are subjected to harsh penalties and are dealt with as prescribed in the legislation.

The Rail, Tram and Bus Union supports the comprehensive drug and alcohol testing regime in place for rail safety workers as mandated in the Rail Safety Act.

We like the rest of the industry care about our safety record and the need to provide a safe and efficient public transport system and we all work together to encourage rail and public transport staff to stay healthy and safe.

We advise anyone who has problems with drugs or alcohol to come forward and self disclose and we will all assist them by providing professional help and support.

In closing it is interesting to note that you have devoted your energies to the last two pages of a comprehensive safety report and you have ignored the real issues that may actually compromise the safety of our system.

Yours truly,

Alex Claassens
Branch Secretary.

Bulletin Issued & Authorised by ALEX CLAASSENS - BRANCH SECRETARY