

MINING TIMES

Eyes The Windows To Detecting Fatigue & Drugs

Fatigue, drugs and alcohol are all factors known to contribute to scores of road fatalities in Australia every year. But these factors are also responsible for accidents in the workplace and can be particularly hazardous when machinery is used such as in the mining industry.

According to the International Labor Organisation about 15% of all fatalities in the workplace and 25% of all workplace accidents are drug related.

Just as the breathalyser has been used to determine blood alcohol levels in motorists, a new device based on the same principle is being introduced in Australia to detect fatigue and drugs in the workplace and beyond. This could potentially slash the number of accidents.

The MCJ Eyecheck pupillometer, developed in the United States is a lightweight, hand held instrument that measures absolute pupil dynamics to presumptively detect impairment caused by fatigue, drugs or intoxicating compounds.

MCJ chief executive John Dal Santo explained that the pupillometer used a scattered light technique to detect whether an individual was fatigued or was under the influence of a depressant or suppressant based on a neurological response from a flash of light.

“It shows how the brain disseminates the flash of light and reports back to the pupil through dilation, constriction and redilation,” he said.

Dal Santo said the Eyecheck test has a reliability rating of 97% based on results being tested and matched to GC/MS (Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry) in studies spanning over six years in the United States.

Typically urinalysis is used for drug testing, but with about a 90% negative rate this is an expensive method. Dal Santo said with a one time cost and minor recurring costs an enormous amount of money could be saved with the pupillometer.

The device is also viewed as a good alternative to urinalysis as it is non-invasive, portable, user friendly with a pass/fail indicator and is easy to use.

However, further testing is required such as urinalysis if individuals test positive to the pupillometer.

The Australian, New Zealand and Australasian distributor and agent for Eyecheck, Clinical Medical Marketing has been promoting the pupillometer across Australia.

“The unions we have spoken to are in favour of this as it doesn’t pick up the recreational users and only those who are impaired,” director Murray Simon said. “That means if they smoke a joint on Friday and come to work on Monday, the urine test would pick it up but the pupillometer test would come up negative., the focus being on workplace safety not punitive measure”

He said one Australian mining company was already trialling the device.

For more information contact Clinical Medical Marketing on 08 9388 3618 or
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