

Medication and Safe Work: Check Before the Task

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 6, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

A medicine warning can matter when driving, climbing or operating equipment. The useful question is whether today's task can be done safely. Workers should be able to ask for help privately without announcing their medicines to the crew.

Objective: Identify the private help route and a workable alternative when a medicine warning affects the task.

Key hazards or failure points

Unresolved warnings; dizziness or slowed coordination; assuming no sleepiness means no effect; pressure to finish; no relief person; an unsafe drive home.

Practical controls

- Read the actual prescription or over-the-counter label. Ask a pharmacist or prescriber about the work you do and any relevant warning. Do not change prescribed treatment on a supervisor's advice.
- Use the designated private reporting process when a warning or symptom may affect safe performance. Discuss work restrictions with the appropriate person; do not collect diagnoses or medicine lists during this talk.
- The leader arranges relief, reassignment or another safe option before exposure. Include transportation if the person cannot drive. Keep the affected task on hold while questions remain.

Verify It in the Field

Ask everyone to identify the private contact and a backup. Confirm those people are available today and can arrange a task review. A policy posted on a wall is not enough.

For an affected assignment, privately confirm that relevant warnings have been addressed with appropriate clinical advice and the employer's process. Do not use a driving, balance or machinery test to prove fitness.

Check the actual alternative: who takes the held task, where the worker can wait safely and how transport is arranged. Record restrictions, arrangements and the review owner, not medication details.

Stop and reassess

Pause the exposure for relevant unresolved warnings, drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision or poor coordination. Secure work and contact the designated person. Collapse, inability to awaken or breathing difficulty requires emergency help; do not assume the cause.

Ask the crew

1. Who can you contact privately today?
2. What work would need relief if you could not drive or operate equipment?
3. What is our safe transportation backup?

Today's check: make the safe alternative real before assigning the task.

Sources: FDA, Some Medicines and Driving Don't Mix; OSHA supervisor support guidance.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.