

# THE REGISTER-HERALD

The Fayette Tribune | The Montgomery Herald

## Raleigh commission adopts drug, alcohol policy

**Mannix Porterfield**

Register-Herald Reporter

Wed, Jun 18 2008

— Hired hands on the payrolls of firms under contract to do business with Raleigh County had best be free of illegal drugs.

Moving to adopt a new state policy coming on line July 1, the county commission agreed Tuesday that contractors need to have drug-free workers when doing business for Raleigh County.

For many years, the policy has been insisted upon by the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation, its local representative, Wayne Rebich, emphasized after the commission put Raleigh in line with the state.

Rebich cited statistics in research performed by the federal Mental Health Association, an arm of the Health and Human Services Department, showing one in a dozen workers in America acknowledged using narcotics within the past month.

In the construction industry, that shakes out to some 15.1 percent of the work force, ranking it second among admitted drug abusers, Rebich said.

"And those are only the people who admitted it," the Beckley resident said.

"You could imagine the people that didn't admit it. So I would say the percentage is probably higher."

Just this past legislative session, the Legislature enacted SB657 known as the Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace Act, but it only covered contractors performing work for the state.

"I felt it necessary for the county to come in line with the state," Rebich said.

"The state not only does construction projects, but so do the counties. We're about to build a multi-million dollar judicial annex."

County attorney Bill Roop advised the commission that each employer is responsible for paying the cost of the drug test, which runs from \$40 to \$60, but any money required for treatment must come from the worker.

"There is no other obligation for the contractor except to provide a list of potential rehabilitation places that an employee could go to obtain the services that he may need regarding drug rehab," Roop said.

Once rehab is completed, Rebich explained, a worker may present negative results of a follow-up test to reclaim employment.

Roop told the commission there was some debate about setting a minimum number of employees before a company was required to provide the testing. Some felt a small firm would have to forfeit what would prove to be a critical worker.

"At the same time, we don't want that individual working for the county," Commissioner John Humphrey said.

"It's a safety issue," Roop said. "We had talked about a minimum of 10. The problem is, where do you draw the line? I don't know that there is a clear line."

— E-mail:

mannix@register-herald.com

Copyright © 1999-2008 cnhi, inc.