

## An Opioid Overdose Response Program at Koppers Inc.

### What's the Risk?

Substance misuse in the workplace negatively impacts safety and employee wellbeing. About [66% of adults](#) with a substance use disorder are currently in the workforce. Additionally, the number of people dying from drug overdose is at an [all-time high](#), with opioids driving a majority of these deaths. [Workplace overdose deaths](#) have increased by more than 600% since 2011, and overdoses now cause nearly 10% of all worker deaths on the job. On average, the highest rates of unintentional overdose deaths occur in the construction, manufacturing and utilities industries.

Koppers Inc. is an integrated global provider of essential treated wood products, wood preservation technologies and carbon compounds. The company prides itself on its foundational Zero Harm safety culture, which places the health, safety and wellbeing of its people above all else. In upholding this commitment, employees understand the overall increased risk of opioid misuse, which can occur both at work and within their communities, and can result in the deaths of co-workers, family members, friends and community members. As the prevalence of substance misuse and particularly opioid misuse continues to rise, Koppers leadership found it imperative for all employees across the company to become aware of the signs of an opioid overdose and how to respond to these emergencies effectively.

### Implementation of an Opioid Overdose Response Program at Koppers

To better prepare staff for an overdose emergency and help improve worker safety, Koppers' Zero Harm department implemented an [opioid overdose response program](#). The program supports access to naloxone, an opioid overdose reversal medication that can combat the life-threatening effects of an opioid overdose, and provides training and resources to workers. Including naloxone in workplace automated external defibrillator (AED) cabinets or elsewhere onsite is critical to emergency response and can help save lives.

Koppers incorporates the core components of an opioid overdose response program, including naloxone distribution, policies and procedures, opioid overdose emergency training for all staff, and supportive post-overdose response policies. The Koppers team believes creating an opioid overdose response program fits logically within its serious incident or fatality (SIF) prevention program.

Koppers leadership followed the steps below to implement this program throughout their facilities in just three months:

**1. Plan**

To get buy-in to start the program, relevant statistics on the impact of opioid overdose and workplace safety were shared with organizational leadership. Koppers also assessed their risk for workplace overdose and began to research resources to combat this growing issue. The Director of Global Safety and Health contacted representatives at the National Safety Council to receive information on risk mitigation strategies.

**2. Provide naloxone**

Koppers Zero Harm Department members partnered with Emergent BioSolutions (the maker of NARCAN®, a common naloxone brand) to purchase naloxone kits. The kits were distributed to more than 30 Koppers operating locations across the United States. At each worksite, the naloxone kits were made easily accessible by placing them inside AED cabinets to improve response times to all emergencies.

**3. Train staff**

Alongside distributing kits, Koppers embedded naloxone training into their emergency response training. Initial training included a safety presentation with company-specific policy information, how to identify a potential opioid overdose and how to administer naloxone. A train-the-trainer model was utilized so plant managers and safety representatives could deliver the training to all employees. The Koppers Zero Harm team also conducts annual opioid overdose and naloxone administration refresher training, usually in the form of a toolbox talk.

**4. Maintain the program**

Staff at Koppers are tasked with the maintenance of the opioid overdose response program to ensure long term success. Zero Harm team members conduct monthly safety checks and inspections of the naloxone kits by checking the availability, usage and expiration dates of naloxone dosages.

In addition to these key steps, several safety initiatives involving naloxone were implemented at Koppers:

- A sticker and a quick reference guide were placed at each naloxone kit location to help workers identify the medication and quickly review how to administer it
- During monthly safety meetings, workers can test the naloxone nasal spray device and employees are encouraged to have an open discussion about substance misuse and their experiences
- Koppers provides other services to help employees dealing with substance misuse and addiction such as their employee assistance program

## Impacts

According to Koppers, the opioid overdose response program has been well received by staff and there were limited challenges with program rollout. Staff were very open to the program and are now more confident in their ability to identify and respond to an opioid overdose. Workers feel more educated regarding opioid overdoses and can use this program to inform others around them. The program benefits not only Koppers staff but also its contractors, delivery drivers and visitors.

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Since the time of program implementation, there have not been any overdoses reported at any Koppers sites. Nonetheless, Koppers staff are continuing to emphasize the importance of emergency preparedness related to this and other hazards. Workers are now aware of the seriousness of opioids and have the knowledge to respond effectively to an opioid overdose at work or in the community. Employees report feelings of responsibility and accomplishment, knowing that if there is an emergency, they have the tools to save a life not only for fellow employees but for visitors and community members alike.

## Lessons Learned

Koppers highlighted several lessons learned during the opioid overdose response program implementation and recommendations for future iterations:

- **Having a respond ready workplace helps workers feel empowered**

Educating employees on how to identify the signs of an opioid overdose and training on naloxone administration empowers employees to respond to the crisis both on and off the job

- **Hands-on training is beneficial to employees' emergency response**

Regular safety training alongside hands-on training on naloxone administration improves workers' capabilities in an emergency; proper training allows employees to gain a better understanding of what occurs during an opioid overdose, thus increasing their confidence to respond in an emergency

- **Stigma reduction and complementary health resources are important additions to any program**

Providing an employee assistance program adds another layer of support for workers to ensure that Koppers team members have the resources needed to deal with any health issues with which they or their family members are struggling; leadership is aware of the stigma surrounding opioid overdose cases and has integrated anti-stigma education and employee engagement into their overdose preparedness and response efforts

Leadership and employees at Koppers Inc. have deemed the implementation of the opioid overdose response program successful. The company's Zero Harm team hopes to improve and expand its safety resources across facilities nationwide.



At Koppers, we are transforming global infrastructure the right way, together. As a vertically integrated provider of essential treated wood products, wood preservation technologies and carbon compounds, our products and services are primarily used for railroad crossties, utility poles and outdoor wooden structures. We take pride in the critical role our company plays in everyday life to enable the safe transport of people and goods, keep power flowing, and create outdoor spaces of enjoyment.

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