

**BLOOD ALCOHOL LIMIT AMENDMENTS**

2020 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: James A. Dunnigan**

Senate Sponsor: Curtis S. Bramble

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill amends provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act regarding an employee's blood or breath alcohol concentration.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

▶ in relation to certain workers' compensation claims, reduces the blood or breath alcohol concentration threshold at which:

- an employer's permitting, encouraging, or having actual knowledge of an employee's intoxication from alcohol may affect compensation provided under the Workers' Compensation Act;
- it is presumed that the major contributing cause of an employee's injury is the employee's intoxication from alcohol; and
- the termination of an employee from reemployment for the employee's use of alcohol may affect the employee's disability compensation for a disability claim.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

None

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**

AMENDS:

[34A-2-302](#), as last amended by Laws of Utah 2014, Chapter 182

[34A-2-410.5](#), as enacted by Laws of Utah 2008, Chapter 349

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*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section 34A-2-302 is amended to read:

**34A-2-302. Employee's willful misconduct -- Penalty.**

(1) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Controlled substance" is as defined in Section 58-37-2.

(b) "Local government employee" is as defined in Section 34-41-101.

(c) "Local governmental entity" is as defined in Section 34-41-101.

(d) "State institution of higher education" is as defined in Section 34-41-101.

(e) "Valid prescription" is a prescription, as defined in Section 58-37-2, that:

(i) is prescribed for a controlled substance for use by the employee for whom it was prescribed; and

(ii) has not been altered or forged.

(2) An employee may not:

(a) remove, displace, damage, destroy, or carry away any safety device or safeguard provided for use in any employment or place of employment;

(b) interfere in any way with the use of a safety device or safeguard described in Subsection (2)(a) by any other person;

(c) interfere with the use of any method or process adopted for the protection of any employee in the employer's employment or place of employment; or

(d) fail or neglect to follow and obey orders and to do every other thing reasonably necessary to protect the life, health, and safety of employees.

(3) Except in case of injury resulting in death:

(a) compensation provided for by this chapter shall be reduced 15% when injury is caused by the willful failure of the employee:

(i) to use safety devices when provided by the employer; or

(ii) to obey any order or reasonable rule adopted by the employer for the safety of the employee; and

58 (b) except when the employer permitted, encouraged, or had actual knowledge of the  
59 conduct described in Subsection (4):

60 (i) disability compensation may not be awarded under this chapter or Chapter 3, Utah  
61 Occupational Disease Act, to an employee when the major contributing cause of the employee's  
62 injury is the employee's conduct described in Subsection (4); or

63 (ii) disability compensation to an employee under this chapter or Chapter 3, Utah  
64 Occupational Disease Act, shall be reduced by 15% when the employee's conduct is a  
65 contributing cause of the employee's injury but not the major contributing cause.

66 (4) The conduct described in Subsection (3)(b) is the employee's:

67 (a) knowing use of a controlled substance that the employee did not obtain under a  
68 valid prescription;

69 (b) intentional abuse of a controlled substance that the employee obtained under a valid  
70 prescription if the employee uses the controlled substance intentionally:

71 (i) in excess of prescribed therapeutic amounts; or

72 (ii) in an otherwise abusive manner; or

73 (c) intoxication from alcohol with a blood or breath alcohol concentration of [~~-.08~~] .05  
74 grams or greater as shown by a chemical test.

75 (5) (a) For purposes of Subsections (3) and (4), as shown by a chemical test that  
76 conforms to scientifically accepted analytical methods and procedures and includes verification  
77 or confirmation of any positive test result by gas chromatography, gas chromatography-mass  
78 spectroscopy, or other comparably reliable analytical method, before the result of the test may  
79 be used as a basis for the presumption, it is presumed that the major contributing cause of the  
80 employee's injury is the employee's conduct described in Subsection (4) if at the time of the  
81 injury:

82 (i) the employee has in the employee's system:

83 (A) any amount of a controlled substance or its metabolites if the employee did not  
84 obtain the controlled substance under a valid prescription; or

85 (B) a controlled substance the employee obtained under a valid prescription or the

86 metabolites of the controlled substance if the amount in the employee's system is consistent  
87 with the employee using the controlled substance intentionally:

88 (I) in excess of prescribed therapeutic amounts; or

89 (II) in an otherwise abusive manner; or

90 (ii) the employee has a blood or breath alcohol concentration of [~~08~~] .05 grams or  
91 greater.

92 (b) The presumption created under Subsection (5)(a) may be rebutted by a  
93 preponderance of the evidence showing that:

94 (i) the chemical test creating the presumption is inaccurate because the employer failed  
95 to comply with:

96 (A) Sections 34-38-4 through 34-38-6; or

97 (B) if the employer is a local governmental entity or state institution of higher  
98 education, Section 34-41-104 and Subsection 34-41-103(5);

99 (ii) the employee did not engage in the conduct described in Subsection (4);

100 (iii) the test results do not exclude the possibility of passive inhalation of marijuana  
101 because the concentration of total urinary cannabinoids is less than 50 nanograms/ml as  
102 determined by a test conducted in accordance with:

103 (A) Sections 34-38-4 through 34-38-6; or

104 (B) if the employer is a local governmental entity or state institution of higher  
105 education, Section 34-41-104 and Subsection 34-41-103(5);

106 (iv) a competent medical opinion from a physician verifies that the amount of  
107 controlled substances, metabolites, or alcohol in the employee's system does not support a  
108 finding that the conduct described in Subsection (4) was the major contributing cause of the  
109 employee's injury or a contributing cause of the employee's injury; or

110 (v) (A) the conduct described in Subsection (4) was not a contributing cause of the  
111 employee's injury; or

112 (B) the employee's mental and physical condition were not impaired at the time of the  
113 injury.

114 (c) (i) Except as provided in Subsections (5)(c)(ii) and (iii), if a chemical test that  
115 creates the presumption under Subsection (5)(a) is taken at the request of the employer, the  
116 employer shall comply with:

117 (A) Title 34, Chapter 38, Drug and Alcohol Testing; or

118 (B) if the employee is a local governmental employee or an employee of a state  
119 institution of higher education, Title 34, Chapter 41, Local Governmental Entity Drug-Free  
120 Workplace Policies.

121 (ii) Notwithstanding Section 34-38-13, the results of a test taken under Title 34,  
122 Chapter 38, Drug and Alcohol Testing, may be disclosed to the extent necessary to establish or  
123 rebut the presumption created under Subsection (5)(a).

124 (iii) Notwithstanding Section 34-41-103, the results of a test taken under Title 34,  
125 Chapter 41, Local Governmental Entity Drug-Free Workplace Policies, may be disclosed to the  
126 extent necessary to establish or rebut the presumption created under Subsection (5)(a).

127 (6) (a) A test sample taken pursuant to this section shall be taken as a split sample.

128 (b) One part of the sample is to be used by the employer for testing pursuant to  
129 Subsection (5)(a):

130 (i) at a testing facility selected by the employer; and

131 (ii) at the employer's or the employer's workers' compensation carrier's expense.

132 (c) The testing facility selected under Subsection (6)(b) shall hold the part of the  
133 sample not used under Subsection (6)(b) until the sooner of:

134 (i) six months from the date of the original test; or

135 (ii) when the employee requests that the sample be tested.

136 (d) The employee has only six months from the date of the original test to have the  
137 remaining sample tested:

138 (i) at the employee's expense; and

139 (ii) at the testing facility selected by the employee, except that the test shall meet the  
140 requirements of Subsection (5)(a).

141 (7) If any provision of this section, or the application of any provision of this section to

142 any person or circumstance, is held invalid, the remainder of this section shall be given effect  
143 without the invalid provision or application.

144 Section 2. Section **34A-2-410.5** is amended to read:

145 **34A-2-410.5. Employee cooperation with reemployment.**

146 (1) As used in this section:

147 (a) "Controlled substance" is as defined in Section [58-37-2](#).

148 (b) "Correctional facility" means:

149 (i) a correctional facility as defined in Section [76-8-311.3](#); or

150 (ii) a facility operated by or contracting with the federal government to house a  
151 criminal offender in either a secure or nonsecure setting.

152 (c) "Disability claim" means a claim for compensation for:

153 (i) a temporary total disability benefit; or

154 (ii) a temporary partial disability benefit.

155 (d) "Local governmental entity" is as defined in Section [34-41-101](#).

156 (e) "Reemployment" means employment that:

157 (i) is after an accident or occupational disease that is the basis for a disability claim;

158 and

159 (ii) in a manner consistent with Subsection (2)(b), offers to an employee an opportunity  
160 for earnings, considering the employee's:

161 (A) education;

162 (B) experience; and

163 (C) physical and mental impairment or condition.

164 (f) "State institution of higher education" means an institution listed in Section  
165 [53B-3-102](#).

166 (g) "Valid prescription" is a prescription, as defined in Section [58-37-2](#), that is:

167 (i) prescribed for a controlled substance for use by the employee for whom it is  
168 prescribed; and

169 (ii) not altered or forged.

170 (2) In accordance with this section, the commission may reduce or terminate an  
171 employee's disability compensation for a disability claim for good cause shown by the  
172 employer including if:

173 (a) the employer terminates the employee from the reemployment and the termination  
174 is:

175 (i) reasonable;

176 (ii) for cause; and

177 (iii) as a result, in whole or in part, of:

178 (A) criminal conduct;

179 (B) violent conduct; or

180 (C) a violation of a reasonable, written workplace health, safety, licensure, or  
181 nondiscrimination rule that is applied in a manner that is reasonable and nondiscriminatory;

182 (b) the employee is incarcerated in a correctional facility for a period of time that  
183 would result in the termination of the employee's reemployment in accordance with a  
184 reasonable, written workplace rule that is applied in a manner that is reasonable and  
185 nondiscriminatory; or

186 (c) subject to Subsection (6), the employee is terminated from the reemployment:

187 (i) (A) for use of a controlled substance that the employee did not obtain under a valid  
188 prescription;

189 (B) for intentional abuse of a controlled substance that the employee obtained under a  
190 valid prescription, if the employee uses the controlled substance intentionally:

191 (I) in excess of a prescribed therapeutic amount; or

192 (II) in an otherwise abusive manner; or

193 (C) for the use of alcohol that results in intoxication from alcohol with a blood or  
194 breath alcohol concentration of ~~[.08]~~ .05 grams or greater; and

195 (ii) in accordance with a reasonable, written workplace rule that is applied in a manner  
196 that is reasonable and nondiscriminatory.

197 (3) Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, the employee described in

198 Subsection (2) is eligible for medical benefits to the extent otherwise allowed under this title.

199 (4) (a) An employer or the employer's insurance carrier may file an application for a  
200 hearing with the Division of Adjudication to request that an employee's disability  
201 compensation for a disability claim be reduced or terminated under this section.

202 (b) An action under this Subsection (4) is barred if an application for a hearing is not  
203 filed within one year from the day on which the employer terminates the employee from  
204 reemployment as described in Subsection (2).

205 (c) An employer or the employer's insurance carrier shall notify the employee that the  
206 employer or employer's insurance carrier has filed a request for a hearing under this section  
207 within three business days of the day on which the filing is made.

208 (5) (a) The commission may reduce or terminate the disability compensation of an  
209 employee for a disability claim if after a hearing requested under Subsection (4), the  
210 commission determines that the conditions of Subsection (2) are met.

211 (b) The commission shall issue an order as to whether or not an employee's disability  
212 compensation is reduced or terminated under this section by no later than 45 days from the day  
213 on which an application for a hearing is filed.

214 (c) A reduction or termination of disability compensation under this Subsection (5)  
215 takes effect on the day determined by the commission.

216 (d) If the disability compensation is ordered terminated or reduced, the employer or  
217 employer's insurance carrier shall treat a resulting overpayment as an offset against the  
218 employer's or employer's insurance carrier's future obligations to pay disability compensation to  
219 the employee.

220 (6) (a) For purposes of Subsection (2)(c), the commission may consider a chemical test  
221 that conforms to scientifically accepted analytical methods and procedures and includes  
222 verification or confirmation of any positive test result by gas chromatography, gas  
223 chromatography-mass spectroscopy, or other comparably reliable analytical method showing  
224 that the employee has:

225 (i) in the employee's system during employment:



226 (A) any amount of a controlled substance or its metabolites if the employee did not  
227 obtain the controlled substance under a valid prescription; or

228 (B) a controlled substance the employee obtained under a valid prescription or the  
229 metabolites of the controlled substance if the amount in the employee's system is consistent  
230 with the employee using the controlled substance intentionally:

231 (I) in excess of prescribed therapeutic amounts; or

232 (II) in an otherwise abusive manner; or

233 (ii) a blood or breath alcohol concentration of [~~.08~~] .05 grams or greater during  
234 employment.

235 (b) A local governmental entity or state institution of higher education shall comply  
236 with Title 34, Chapter 41, Local Governmental Entity Drug-Free Workplace Policies, in  
237 engaging in a test for a controlled substance that is the basis of a presumption under this  
238 section.

239 (7) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the  
240 commission may make rules:

241 (a) describing factors to be considered under Subsection (2); and

242 (b) related to the procedures for a request for a hearing under this section.

243 (8) The adjudication of a dispute arising under this section is governed by Part 8,  
244 Adjudication.

245 (9) An issue related to an employee's cooperation with regard to a claim for  
246 compensation for permanent total disability benefits is governed by Section [34A-2-413](#).