

More than 100 airline employees have tested positive to drugs or alcohol over 17 months (Australia)



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MORE than 100 airline industry employees have tested positive to drugs or alcohol in internal tests over a 17-month period, data from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority has revealed.

The tests, which included 80 positive drug detections and 24 alcohol breaches, are those taken by air and cabin crew, maintenance personnel, air traffic control staff, ground and baggage workers, refuellers and security screening employees who have a direct effect on air safety.

The results of internal tests, administered by commercial airlines and private aviation firms, have previously not been made public but were released by CASA for transparency reasons on the basis they did not identify individual operators or personnel.

CASA spokesman Peter Gibson said despite the positive results, they reflected breaches by 0.41 per cent of the 19,402 drug tests and 0.087 per cent of the 27,459 alcohol tests.

While CASA said any positive results for people operating in "safety sensitive" aviation positions was concerning, it is believed only two breaches were recorded by pilots or flight crew with most instances relating to ground staff, baggage handlers or cabin crew.

In a two-tier testing system introduced in 2008, random testing by CASA turned up a further 45 positive drug or alcohol results from 51,000 tests, of which 18 were subsequently overturned following medical reviews that identify prescription medication breaches.

The second tier of testing sees industry operators undertaking internal testing of SSAA (safety sensitive aviation activity) personnel for alcohol and drugs including amphetamines, cannabis, heroin, LSD, Ecstasy, cocaine, sleeping pills and PCP (Phencyclidine).

The legal alcohol limit for airline staff is 0.02 per cent.

A Qantas captain suspected of having consumed alcohol was stood down from the controls of a Boeing 767-300 shortly before it was due to take-off from Sydney on July 30.

It is believed cabin crew raised concerns about the pilot amid suspicions the captain had been drinking prior to the flight.

Eight cabin crew tested positive, five aircraft engineers, one refueller, a security guard, four baggage handlers and two foreign staff.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/more-than-100-airline-employees-have-tested-positive-to-drugs-or-alcohol-over-17-months/story-e6frg6n6-1226505683021>