



Highlights of [GAO-08-225T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

To help prevent accidents resulting from drug use by individuals in safety-sensitive positions, the Department of Transportation (DOT) requires motor carriers to conduct drug testing of their employees. These drug tests involve collecting a urine specimen from employees. To ensure the integrity of the urine specimen and the collection process, DOT regulations provide numerous protocols that outline collection procedures and identify controls to prevent employees from defeating a drug test.

Recent media accounts indicate that some sites performing DOT drug test collections may not be adhering to the collection protocols. Moreover, given the different techniques a drug user may employ in an attempt to defeat a drug test, it is possible that a commercial truck driver could defeat a drug test by diluting, substituting, or adulterating a urine specimen in order to obtain a passing result. GAO was asked to perform an undercover operation to determine whether (1) urine collectors followed DOT protocols at selected collection sites and (2) commercially available products could be used to defeat drug tests.

To perform this undercover operation, GAO created two fictitious trucking companies and produced bogus driver's licenses. GAO investigators then posed as truck drivers to test 24 collection sites throughout the United States. GAO briefed DOT officials on its results and they agreed with the findings.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-225T](#). For more information, contact Gregory Kutz at (202) 512-6722 or kutzg@gao.gov.

DRUG TESTING

Undercover Tests Reveal Significant Vulnerabilities in DOT's Drug Testing Program

What GAO Found

DOT's drug testing program is vulnerable to manipulation by drug users, especially given the wide availability of products designed to defeat drug tests. While all urine collection sites followed DOT protocols by asking GAO undercover investigators to provide identification, investigators successfully used bogus driver's licenses to gain access to all 24 sites—demonstrating that a drug user could send someone to take a drug test in their place using fake identification. In addition, 22 of the 24 selected urine collection sites did not adequately follow the remaining protocols GAO tested. For example, 75 percent of the urine collection sites GAO tested failed to restrict access to items that could be used to adulterate or dilute the specimen, meaning that running water, soap, or air freshener was available in the bathroom during the test. The table below provides information about the high failure of selected protocols for the 24 collection sites tested.

Failure Rates for Selected DOT Protocols GAO Tested

Selected DOT urine specimen collection protocol	Percentage of the 24 collection sites that failed
Secure the facility from all substances that could be used to adulterate or dilute the specimen	75
Secure all sources of water in the restroom	67
Ask the employee to empty his/her pockets and display items to ensure no items are present that could be used to adulterate the specimen	42
Check the temperature of the specimen	19
Place a bluing agent in the toilet or secure it with tape	17

Source: GAO.

GAO also found that drug masking products such as adulterants, dilutants, and substitutes were widely available on the Internet. After purchasing drug masking products from Web sites, GAO investigators used adulterants at four of the collection sites and substitute synthetic urine at another four sites without being caught by site collectors—demonstrating that these products could easily be brought into a collection site and used during a test. Even in one case where a collection site followed all DOT collection protocols regarding administration of the test, investigators were still able to substitute synthetic urine for their sample. Every drug masking product went undetected by the drug screening labs. Provided the adulterant GAO used would be able to mask drug use as advertised, a drug user would likely be able to use the substances GAO tested to obtain a passing result on his or her test. According to officials GAO interviewed at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), companies that make drug-masking products are aware of government test standards and devise products that prevent laboratories from detecting them. SAMHSA is required to provide information to laboratories on how to test the validity of the urine specimens, publicly providing detailed information on lab testing procedures on its Web site.