

Cansford
Laboratories
Pioneering drug and alcohol testing

Aviation Guide

What you need to know about testing for alcohol and drugs

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Introduction

Your Helicopter is your office, your workplace and workspace - maybe you are a first officer, a trainer, a first-time flyer or an aspiring pilot. Perhaps you are in the aviation industry in an HR role, CEO or secretary of a club. Commercial or leisure, Class 1 or Class 2, it can be complicated navigating your way through the types of drug and alcohol testing required to be fit to fly.

In the UK, drug and alcohol testing for helicopter pilots and crew members is an essential aspect of ensuring aviation safety - overseen by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

While we might be stating the obvious - and easy, as everyone knows about the safety laws, right? - navigating your way through the complex methods of drug and alcohol testing options is most definitely not.

It's vital that you know what you need, when you need it and where - aside from the how, what, why, where and when - in order to keep the skies and people safe.

There are different methods of collecting a sample whether that is urine, hair, nails, PEth blood testing or oral fluid. This also includes breathalysers.



We also offer two options: you can either choose the Cansford Sample Collection Network of 50+ agents or select our `In house` option, where we supply the kit and training supported by our lab services.

Cansford has worked with many aviation companies - specifically helicopter firms - over the years. In that time, we've undertaken comprehensive testing across the UK to various airfields, hangars and offices both landside and airside.

We hope you find this information useful when considering drug and alcohol testing. Please do get in touch if you have any questions.

Types of testing

Helicopter pilots and crew members are subject to both pre-employment and random drug and alcohol testing. These tests are designed to identify any substances that may impair a pilot's ability to safely operate an aircraft.

The primary objective is to ensure that aviation professionals are not under the influence of drugs or alcohol while performing their duties.

The drug and alcohol testing program for helicopter personnel in the UK typically includes the following elements:

Pre-employment Testing

Before being employed, prospective helicopter pilots and crew members are required to undergo drug and alcohol testing as part of the recruitment process.

This initial screening helps to ensure that individuals joining the industry are free from any substance abuse issues.

Random Testing

Helicopter pilots and crew members are subject to random drug and alcohol testing throughout their employment.

This means that at any given time, they may be selected for testing without prior notice.

Random testing helps to deter substance abuse and maintain a high level of safety in aviation operations.

Post-Incident Testing

Following a significant incident or accident involving a helicopter, the pilots and crew members involved may be required to undergo drug and alcohol testing.

This is done to determine if substances played a role in the event and to assess the individuals' fitness for future duty.

Examples of the circumstances under which the CAA can limit, suspend or revoke licences, ratings or certificates are, but not limited to:

- a. Competence and qualification.
- b. Falsification of/or failure to keep records.
- c. Propensity not to abide by rules and regulations.
- d. Any actions impacting on flight safety or on the safety of persons on the ground.
- e. Alcohol or other psychoactive substances.
- f. Drug related offences or activities.
- g. Sexual offences.
- h. Criminal convictions.
- i. Non-compliance with the CAA Fitness of Character Policy which can be found on the CAA website

The types of drugs we test for

Cansford has a 6-drug panel available for testing, which includes half a dozen of the most common or popular drugs.

We also test for prescription medications, and other compounds such as Spice and Monkey Dust, Magic Mushrooms, Steroids and anti-depressants, plus many others. We have one of the widest and most comprehensive drug testing portfolios in the UK.

- Amphetamine
- Methamphetamine
- Cannabis (THC)
- Cocaine
- Benzodiazepines
- Opiates
- ... and of course alcohol



Types of testing #1

Laboratories like Cansford use different tests depending on the purpose of the test and the detection window required. These include:



PEth blood test

Phosphatidylethanol (PEth) is a very specific alcohol biomarker and provides the highest sensitivity for the detection of current regular alcohol consumption. PEth testing is particularly effective for detecting chronic and heavy drinking. PEth requires only a few drops of blood in the form of 'dry blood spots' that are taken for analysis at a laboratory.



Hair strand test

A hair strand test is among the most accurate laboratory tests for drugs and alcohol – and is almost impossible to cheat. The method can be used to detect virtually all drug and alcohol substances, between seven days and six months after their use. Test results also indicate the month in which a donor ingested a substance and can therefore be used to build a 'picture' of substance use over time.



Breathalyser

Cansford also provides this service, to test in the moment breath alcohol levels. Breath alcohol testing can also be used in conjunction with other methods of testing. One method might be to use a breathalyser with a hair sample or a PEth blood test to determine the window of detection and use over a period of time. The model Cansford uses is Ministry of Justice approved, meaning any test results are legally admissible in court or at a tribunal hearing.

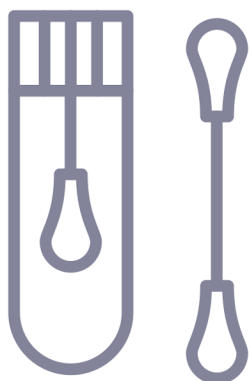
Collecting a hair sample is simple and empathetic, as we take hair for hair strand tests in a way which is hidden on the scalp

Types of testing #2



Nails

Nail testing offers a sensitive, versatile alternative to hair testing, when the latter is not possible. Like hair testing, nail testing can be used to detect drug and alcohol use across long detection windows. This is approximately between six and 12 months – according to whether the sample is a fingernail or toenail. We take a small sliver of nail, which is painless.



Oral fluid (Saliva)

Oral fluid test results can be offered instantly, using point-of-care tests. Alternatively, samples can be sent to our laboratory and tested with greater accuracy. For this reason, point-of-care saliva testing is typically used to support other test methods.

Oral fluid testing has many advantages over urine testing – which is why we choose to not to offer the latter. Oral fluid samples can be collected under supervision and observation which isn't the case with workplace urine testing, making it almost impossible to tamper with any saliva samples provided.



Point of care testing

We can undertake point-of-care testing anywhere in the UK. If you want us to test airside then we would need the right permissions in place. But we're quick and accurate. While urine used to be a commonly used and requested test, there are other tests which can be used that are cleaner, and less invasive or embarrassing for the donor.

Cansford prefers to use an oral fluid 'instant point-of-care' cube, which has a very short window of detection of up to 48 hours. It's confirmation 'in the moment' but can also be used in conjunction with other testing methods to establish a longer timeframe of drug or alcohol use by the donor.

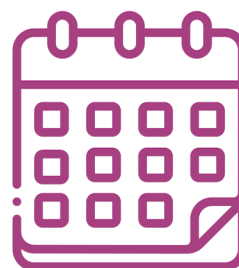
Speed and accreditation

The time it takes to test a sample varies from laboratory to laboratory. It can be either 'in the moment' or take from three working days to 30 days after the sample is received. The cost of a hair test is more complicated and can be affected by factors including:

The **number** of substances being tested for



The **window** of detection being tested for



It's important that whatever type of test is undertaken, it must be accurate, reliably conducted to professional standards and produces results quickly.

At Cansford, we pride ourselves on a back-to-lab-test results ready within three working days. So order on a Monday, get your results by Friday of the same week.

"There's traditionally been an unofficial 8-hour "bottle to throttle" rule among pilots, avoiding alcohol for at least 8 hours before they fly. This time-based calculation, however, could still allow low levels of alcohol to remain in the system, depending on the amount consumed and other factors."

Choosing your laboratory

It's essential you choose the **right lab with the right credentials and experience testing in your industry** – and ask them questions:



Are they a genuine, established, and reputable company?



Do they carry out tests in the UK (not overseas)?



Do they comply to the Society of Hair Testing (SoHT) guidelines?



Do they have an ISO/IEC 17025 standard rating?



Do they have experience with chain of custody?



Do they have dedicated reporting scientists who can help you understand the results? And appear at hearings such as panel or tribunal hearings?

“Top five factors when choosing the right lab: Proficiency, Speed, Cost, Accuracy, Accreditation.”

Cansford Labs accreditation (and why we are trusted within the industry.)

We are **discreet, trustworthy and our work is done with the upmost confidentiality.**

We **adhere strictly to GDPR law and NDAs at all times**, protecting you and the donor (regardless of their job rank and position).



We are the **only laboratory in the UK testing for steroids in hair**, where 99% of the results are returned to you within three days or less.

We pride ourselves on a **3 working day turnaround time with back-to-lab testing.** Order Monday, get results Friday the same week...

We are **UKAS accredited for drugs and alcohol markers** to ISO 17025:2017 standards.

We are **leading members** of the Society of Hair Testing (SoHT), and The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT.)

Testimonial

British International Helicopters Limited (Bristow Group)

British International Helicopters Limited, appointed Cansford Laboratories for our in-house drug and alcohol testing and our back-up sample collection service in July 2021.

From initial enquiry, right through to implementation of the new policy, Cansford have been instrumental in guiding BIHSL through all stages of launching this Policy.

We are incredibly satisfied with their service, their face-to-face training was delivered professionally and they are extremely helpful, knowledgeable and nothing seems to be too much trouble for them.

We would highly recommend Cansford for any business who are considering launching and rolling out a similar Policy in the future.

Marie Lawson
HR Business Partner



British International Helicopters

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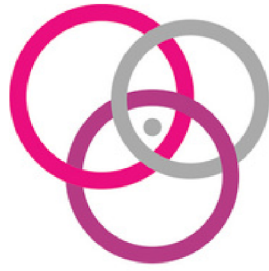


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