

Workplace Health and Safety: Foundations and the IRS

This slideshow is intended to support safe and healthy workplaces in Nova Scotia.

It is an information and awareness resource that links to the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Division, the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety websites. Hyperlinks to these sites are in blue and underlined.

This slideshow may be downloaded and used to help begin the conversation about workplace health, safety and injury prevention.

Welcome!

Knowing the foundations of workplace health and safety helps us keep ourselves and others safe at work. This includes an introduction to:

- The Internal Responsibility System (IRS)
- Nova Scotia workplace safety law
- Employer responsibilities
- Employee rights and responsibilities
- Duty of care and due diligence
- Good quality health and safety resources

What is “workplace health and safety” ?

Workplace health and safety refers to the study and implementation of approaches and methods designed to protect the safety, health and welfare of people at work. It is typically inter-disciplinary in nature and practice. The word “occupational” is used in place of ‘workplace’ for the acronym ‘OHS’ or OH&S’.

A little history...

- [Royal Commission: Health & Safety of Workers in Mines](#)
- [Hoggs Hollow Disaster](#)
- [The Westray Story: Inquiry](#)

The Internal Responsibility System (IRS)

- What is it?

A legal philosophy underpinning Canadian safety law that says everyone at the workplace has and shares responsibility for health and safety. [Nova Scotia safety law says everyone shares responsibility](#) for health and safety to the extent of their workplace authority and ability.

- The IRS and Nova Scotia workplace health and safety law is supported and monitored by Nova Scotia's [OHS Division](#)

The IRS ensures a framework for:

- Sharing of responsibility by workplace parties
- Participation in safety (JOHSC & Safety Rep.'s)
- Knowledge and control of hazards
- Refusal of unsafe work
- Safety management programs and system

IRS: Employer Responsibilities include:

- Meeting obligations under law
- Having safe equipment, properly maintained
- Ensuring proper safety training for everyone
- Providing effective supervision
- Establishing a JOHSC (Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee) or Safety Representatives.

IRS: Employee Rights include:

- Right to participate in safety at the workplace.
- Right to know about hazards and how to stay safe.
- Right to refuse unsafe work that could harm them or someone else at the workplace.

Rights are exercised for self and for others!

IRS: Employee Responsibilities include:

- Taking every reasonable precaution to protect health and safety of self and others
- Using PPE (personal protective equipment)
- Applying health and safety training
- Using equipment properly and safely
- Complying with safety rules and law
- Reporting hazards and injuries
- Cooperating with JOHSC or safety representative

Workplace safety duty of care includes:

- The employer doing everything reasonable to keep employees safe from harm.
- What workplace parties DO to show the IRS in action.
- Actions taken for safety of self and others at work.
- “Due diligence” is a legal term for when employers must show they’ve done everything reasonable and practicable to keep workers healthy and safe.

Everyone Has a Role to Play in Safety!

Whether you're an employee or employer, your decisions and actions can affect your safety and that of others at work.

Creating a positive environment to discuss this is vital to creating safer workplaces in Nova Scotia.

The [Simple Acts video and discussion guide](#) can help!



To learn more about the foundations of workplace health and safety please visit:

[Nova Scotia LAE Safety Branch and OHS Division](#)

[NS OHS Act and Regulations](#)

[Government of Canada](#)

Employment & Social Development (ESDC)

What's next?

What changes could be made in your workplace with this information?

If you'd like more information about workplace health and safety, please view our other injury prevention resources or email info@wcb.ns.ca.

References and Resources:

WCB Nova Scotia : www.worksafeforlife.ca

WCB Nova Scotia: www.wcb.ns.ca

Call toll-free Halifax 1-800-870-3331

Sydney 1-800-880-0003

[Small Business Safety Toolkit](#)

[Small Business Safety Toolkit Cost Calculator](#)

NS LAE - Safety Branch: OHS Division: www.novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety

View OHS News: www.gov.ns.ca/lae/healthandsafety/ohsnews.asp

Email: ohsdivision@gov.ns.ca

Call toll-free: Nova Scotia 1-800-952-2687 and 902-424-5400

Canadian Centre Occupational Health & Safety: Nova Scotia E-Learning:

http://www.ccohs.ca/catalog/courses_list_nova.php

Slide 4:

[Report of the Royal Commission on the Health and Safety of Workers in Mines](#), University of Toronto, Robarts Library Collection

[Hoggs Holllow Disaster](#), Central Ontario Building Trades, public website

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