

Introduction to the Internal Responsibility System: Rights and Responsibilities

This slideshow is designed to help 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!

Being aware of the foundations of workplace health and safety helps us to better understand how to keep ourselves and others safer at work. This includes:

- awareness of workplace health & safety
- an introduction to the Internal Responsibility System (IRS) and rights and responsibilities
- thinking about duty of care and due diligence
- considering business size and health & safety measures
- Using good quality health & safety resources

Introduction:

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; is typically inter-disciplinary in nature and practice. Oftentimes the word “occupational” is used in place of ‘workplace’ for the acronym ‘OHS’ or OHS’.

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 is supported and monitored by the [OHS Division](#) of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

The IRS ensures a framework for:

- Sharing of responsibility by workplace parties
- Participation in safety eg. working with joint occupational health and safety committees (JOHSC) and safety representatives
- Knowledge and control of hazards
- Refusal of Unsafe Work
- Safety management programs and systems

IRS: Employer Responsibilities include:

- Following obligations under law
- Having safe equipment that is properly maintained
- Ensuring proper safety training for everyone
- Providing effective supervision
- Establishing JOHSC and/or Safety Rep's

IRS: Worker Rights

- Right to participate in safety
- Right to know about hazards
- Right to refuse unsafe work; work the worker feels could hurt themselves or someone else
- Rights are exercised for self and for others!

IRS: Worker Responsibilities include:

- Working for safety of self and others
- Using PPE
- Applying safety training
- Using equipment properly and safely
- following safety law and safety rules
- Reporting hazards
- Cooperating with the JOHSC

Showing duty of care - due diligence - is:

- Employers doing everything reasonable in the circumstances to keep employees safe from harm.
- It's about what workplace parties actually do to ensure the IRS is alive, well and in action.
- “Due diligence” is a legal defense for employers.
- Duty of care is how we act to help keep others healthy and safe at work.

Wrap Up

Being aware of the foundations of workplace health and safety helps us better understand how to keep ourselves and others safer at work. This includes:

- Knowledge of the Internal Responsibility System (IRS)
- Understanding employer responsibilities
- Understanding employee rights and responsibilities
- Awareness of duty of care and due diligence
- Knowing where to go for information and resources

To learn more about IRS rights, responsibilities and other key workplace health and safety principles visit:

[Nova Scotia OHS Division](#)

Dept. Labour and Advanced Education

[NS OHS Act and Regulations](#)

[Employment & Social Development Canada](#)

Government of Canada

Introduction to the IRS: References & Resources

WCB Nova Scotia www.worksafeforlife.ca and www.wcb.ns.ca
Call toll-free Halifax 1-800-870-3331 and Sydney 1-800-880-0003

[Small Business Safety Toolkit](#) and [Small Business Safety Toolkit Cost Calculator](#)

Nova Scotia 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 or 902-424-5400

[Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](#)

[Nova Scotia Labour and Advanced Education & CCOHS E-Learning Portal](#)