



IRS PRIMER

You may be reading this as pre-work for the Managing Hazards and Risks training session.

Your facilitator will be discussing the IRS and the information contained in this primer, as this is the foundation of managing hazards and risks in the workplace.

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Introduction

The Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is part of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA). Very simply put, the IRS is all about teamwork.

Everyone in the workplace has a shared responsibility to make sure that the workplace is healthy and safe for everyone, from senior management to the worker.

The graphic below shows the basic relationship and some general responsibilities for employers, supervisors and workers in the IRS:

INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM

Employers provide a safe environment, establish the health and safety program and policy and are responsible for health and safety within the organization

Supervisors communicate, monitor and enforce programs and policies

Workers comply, participate and bring concerns to the attention of the company

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Employer Duties

The *OHSA* assigns specific duties to employers and provides for other duties to be prescribed by regulation. Some excerpts from Sections 25 and 26 are as follows:

- Take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of workers
- Ensure that equipment, materials and protective devices are provided and maintained in good condition
- Provide information, instruction and supervision to protect worker health and safety
- Co-operate with the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or Health and Safety Representative
- Appoint competent persons as supervisors
- Develop and implement a health and safety program and policy
- Post a copy of the *OHSA* in the workplace
- Provide health and safety reports to the JHSC
- Any other duties as may be prescribed

Supervisor Duties

The *OHSA* assigns specific duties to supervisors and provides for other duties to be prescribed by regulation. Some excerpts from Section 27 are as follows:

Supervisors have the responsibility to ensure workers:

- Work in a healthy and safe manner following policies, procedures and the law
- Use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing required by the employer

Supervisors are also required to:

- Advise workers of any potential or actual dangers
- Provide workers with training and written instructions on workplace hazards and procedures to protect the worker
- Take every precaution reasonable for the protection of workers

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Worker Duties and Rights

Workers have a general duty to take responsibility for personal health and safety.

Section 28 of OHSA includes the following duties:

- Work in compliance with the OHSA and regulations
- Use any equipment, protective devices or clothing required by the employer
- Tell the employer or supervisor about any known missing or defective equipment or protective device that may cause danger
- Report any known workplace hazard or contravention of the OHSA to the employer or supervisor
- Not remove or make ineffective any protective device required by the employer or by the regulations
- Not work in a way that will injure themselves or others
- Not engage in any horseplay or fooling around

The OHSA assigns three basic rights to every worker:

1. **The right to know.** Workers have the right to know about the hazards in their job. An employer or supervisor must tell them about anything in the job that can hurt them and how to protect themselves.
2. **The right to participate.** Everyone has the right to take part in keeping the workplace healthy and safe. A worker, depending on the size of the company, may become part of the Joint Health and Safety Committee or be appointed a health and safety representative. Everyone has the right to participate in training and information sessions to help them do their job safely.
3. **The right to refuse unsafe work.** If a worker believes their job is likely to endanger someone else or themselves, they have an obligation to report the unsafe situation to management. If the situation is not corrected and they feel that their health and safety is still in danger, they have the right under the *OHSA* to refuse to perform the work without reprisal.

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IRS Direct and Indirect Responsibilities

There are direct and indirect responsibilities in the IRS. The table below summarizes the responsibility types in a company's IRS:

Direct IRS Responsibility	Indirect IRS Responsibility
Employer	Ministry of Labour
Health and Safety Representative	Workplace Safety & Insurance Board
Joint Health and Safety Committee	Health and Safety Associations
Supervisor	Union
Worker	

In addition to those with direct responsibility, a number of people and agencies have contributive responsibility for health and safety. Within any organization, the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) has a key contributive part:

- in health and safety in general, and
- in making the IRS work well.

The organization's health and safety staff also play a contributive role.

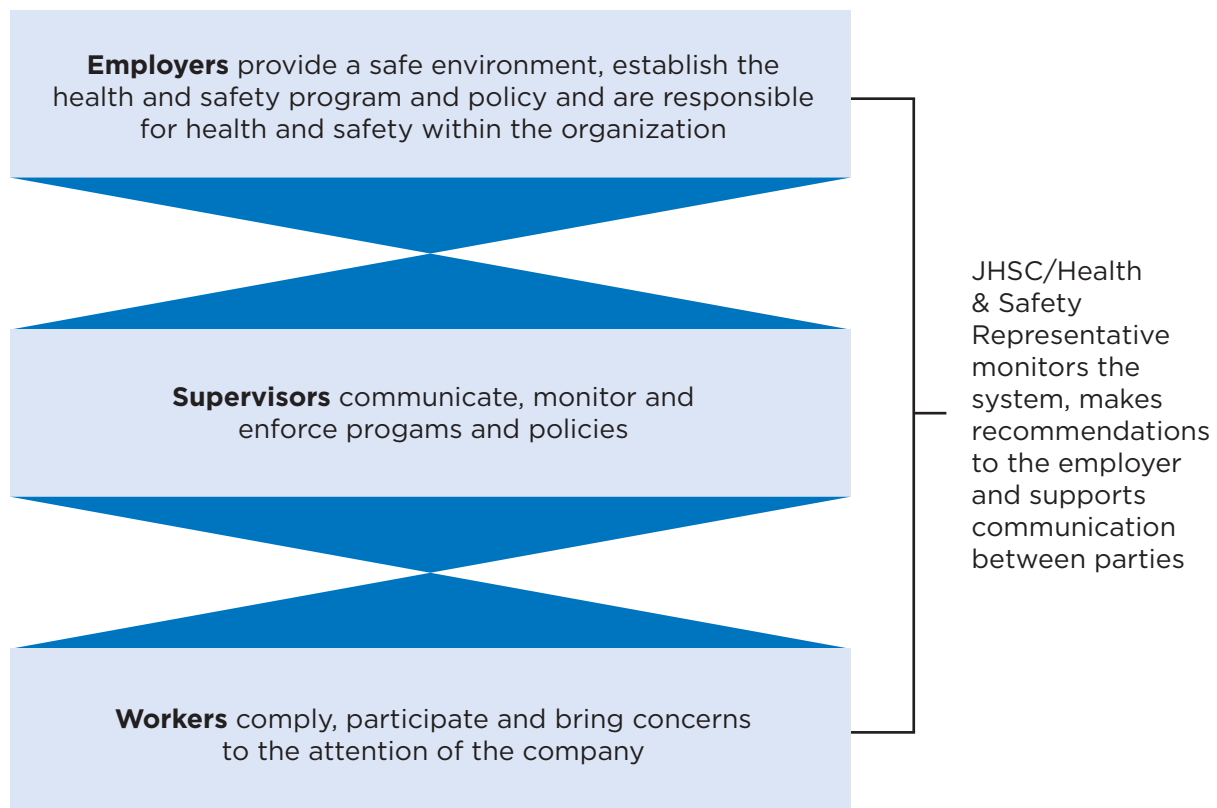
Resource: https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/mining/syn_minirs_2.php#fn1b

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Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative

- Monitors the functioning of the IRS and recommends improvements when indicated
- Inspects the workplace for potential or actual hazards
- Investigates critical or fatal incidents
- Monitors the health and safety policies and program
- Acts as a channel of communication between workplace parties
- Acts as a liaison with the Ministry of Labour so that any weaknesses in the IRS and other health and safety concerns can be brought to the attention of the inspector
- Checks to make sure recommended changes are made and maintained

INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM

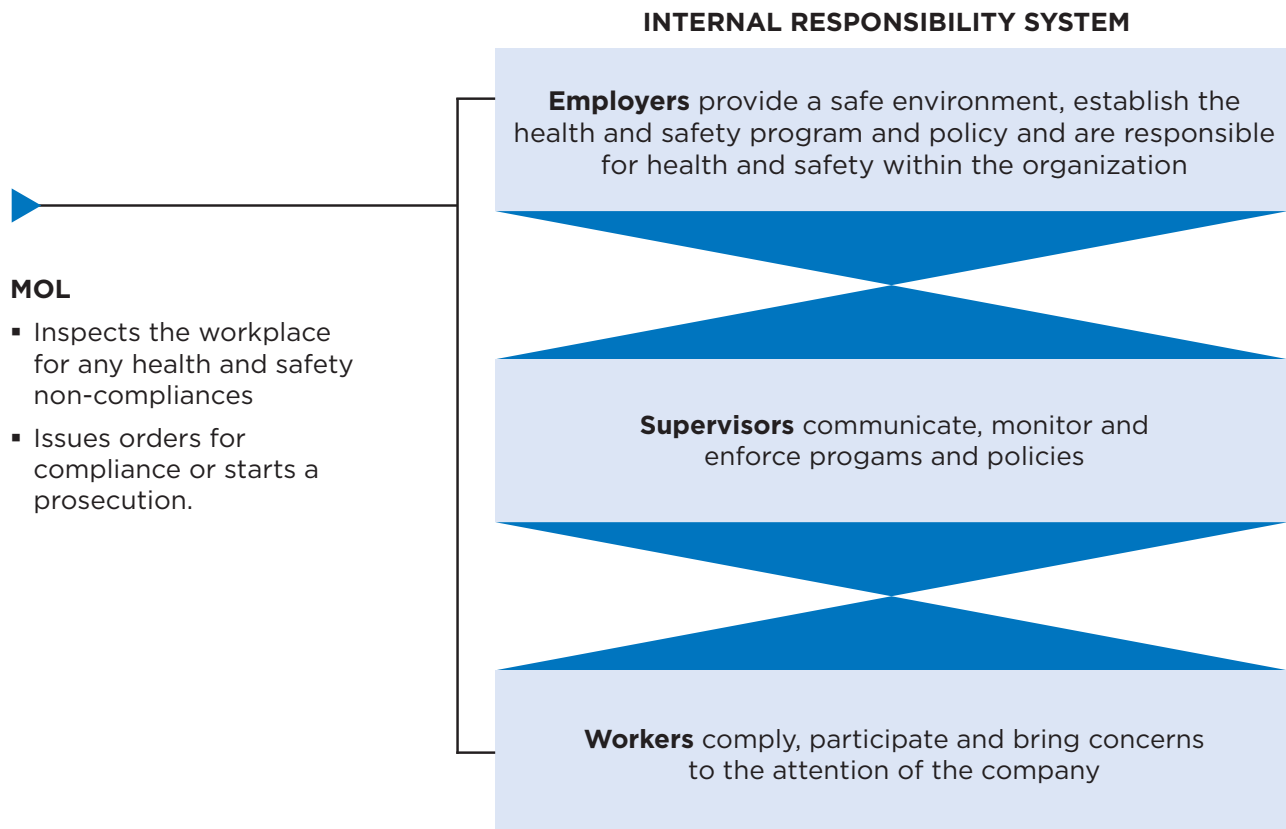


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The Ministry of Labour’s (MOL) Role

The Ministry of Labour’s responsibility in the IRS is to make sure workplaces are complying with the laws under the *OHSA*. Compliance means that the company’s IRS is working to address health and safety issues. They may investigate a hazardous situation, a work refusal, start a prosecution or issue orders to companies to obey the laws of the *OHSA*.

The graphic below shows the indirect function of the MOL in the IRS of a company:



In workplaces where employees are organized, the **Union** has an indirect responsibility in the IRS. The members of the Union, and their representatives who are employees of the employer are “internal” to the employer’s organization. The Union will also have health and safety resources located “external” to the employer’s organization.

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IRS Self Checklist

On the next page is a chart listing some responsibilities and duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* for

- Employers
- Joint Health and Safety Committees and Health and Safety Representatives
- Supervisors
- Workers

Check off the statements that apply to you.

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IRS Primer Self Checklist

- I provide written instructions on health and safety measures and procedures to the workers
- I comply with my duties and responsibilities under the OHSA
- I appoint a competent person as a supervisor
- I identify hazards or potential hazards in my workplace and report them
- I take every precaution reasonable for the health and safety of workers
- I report any person not complying with the OHSA or regulations
- I inspect the workplace
- I create the health and safety policy and post it
- I make sure workers are aware of any potential or actual hazard which could endanger them in their work
- I make sure employees wear the proper personal protective equipment
- I wear the proper personal protective equipment
- I make sure all equipment is maintained in good condition
- I make sure workers have the training, information and supervision necessary to do their work safely
- I make recommendations to the employer for improvements to increase the health and safety of workers
- I can refuse unsafe work if I believe it is dangerous
- I must respond to recommendations from the JHSC within 21 days
- I work safely with the equipment so I don't harm myself or others
- I make sure my workplace complies with, other than the OHSA, any regulatory, code, or guideline affecting my workplace
- I must help and co-operate with the Ministry of Labour inspector
- I can represent workers at any testing of anything in the workplace where it concerns occupational health and safety
- I can ask my employer for information about actual or potential hazards that the employer may know about

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