

# Applying health and safety best practices to small business

If you own a small business, you won't have all of the same responsibilities as a larger firm, but you must still protect yourself and your workers from workplace hazards by following the law and your industry's best practices.

In fact, as a small business owner, you may need to be more aware of standard health and safety practices because you may not have a health and safety manager or supervisor.

The best practices listed here will help small business owners understand and meet their health and safety responsibilities.



## Know the hazards

As a professional, you know your job and you have your job plans prepared. You also know what can go wrong. Part of your job plan should be to think about the dangers your workers might face while they do those jobs. For the industries served by IHSA, these are the top four hazards:

1. Musculoskeletal hazards (repetitive strain injuries, improper lifting techniques, etc.)
2. Struck-by (being hit by falling or flying objects, moving equipment, or backing vehicles)
3. Falls (improper fall protection, falling from heights, falling through floor openings, etc.)
4. Motor-vehicle incidents (collisions, distracted driving, fatigue, traffic control, etc.).

Once you know the most likely hazards your workers will come across, you can figure out how to prevent them. As best practice, do a job safety analysis (JSA).

1. Write down the steps of the job, as well as any working conditions that would have an effect on safety.
2. Identify any hazards associated with each step of the job or working condition.
3. Decide if any or all of the hazards can be eliminated.
4. If some cannot, use controls to help minimize them.
5. Describe the JSA to your workers, or give them copies.

For a blank JSA form, visit the Resources for Small Businesses page at [ihsa.ca/ihsa.ca/smallbusiness/resources\\_small-businesses.aspx](http://ihsa.ca/ihsa.ca/smallbusiness/resources_small-businesses.aspx)

## Know the rules

Small business owners need to know and understand the health and safety rules and regulations that apply to their company, industry, and workers. It may be the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) for provincially regulated firms or the Canada Labour Code, Part II (CLC) for federally regulated firms.

For example, the federal CLC requires every employer to develop, implement, and monitor a workplace hazard prevention program. On the other hand, the provincial OHSA requires every workplace with more than five employees to have a written health and safety policy and a program to implement that policy.

For help in developing or updating your health and safety or hazard prevention program, visit the Policy and Program Templates section on our website: [ihsa.ca/resources/policy\\_program\\_resources.aspx](http://ihsa.ca/resources/policy_program_resources.aspx)

## Get the training

Depending on the type of work you do, you and your workers may require specific training to meet the health and safety legislation.

Awareness training ensures that workers have the general knowledge and understanding to recognize health and safety risks in a typical workplace. Usually, however, the employer must also provide specialized workplace-specific or site-specific training.

Workplace-specific training ensures that workers are trained on the particular methods, machinery, tools, or applications that they will use at the work.

It is often required for high-risk work such as working at heights, working on overhead powerlines, and operating large trucks or heavy equipment.

In addition, orientation training for new workers is a critical step because they are more likely to be injured than experienced workers. A new worker may be a young worker but can also be a worker who is new to a particular job or jobsite.

## Get a competent supervisor

If an employer appoints a supervisor, they are required by law to ensure that the supervisor is a “competent person”. As defined by the OHSA, a competent person is qualified because of knowledge, training, and experience to organize the work and its performance. For many small businesses, however, one of the supervisors may be the employer.

Supervisory training such as IHSA’s *Basics of Supervising* course can help ensure that supervisors meet the legal requirements of a competent person and develop the skills to do their jobs effectively. This course is available for both provincially and federally regulated firms.

Supervisors need to be proficient in four main health and safety tasks:

1. Inspecting
2. Investigating
3. Enforcing
4. Communicating.

To that end, IHSA recently introduced a one-day *Communication Skills for Supervising Health & Safety* course, which builds on what they learn in *Basics of Supervising*.

## Build health and safety into your business

If you talk about health and safety and put signs and posters around the jobsite, it shows your workers that you care about their well-being. This can help improve employee morale. If safety is important to you, it will be important to them, and they will be more likely to follow your lead. Before long, safety will become a routine, not something that you have to keep reminding them about.

Safety talks are a great way to start the work day and a good reminder to your employees to work safely. Visit IHSA’s Safety Talks web page for over a hundred free safety talks that you can download: [ihsa.ca/resources/safetytalks.aspx](http://ihsa.ca/resources/safetytalks.aspx)

Of course, actions speak louder than words, so be sure to correct any unsafe working conditions. Reward employees who are carrying out their duties safely and discipline those who are not. Workers need to see that there are consequences to their actions.

## Know what’s available to you

Your IHSA membership lets you take training courses or receive health and safety products free of charge or at a reduced cost. Start taking advantage of what’s available to you. Take a look at the [ihsa.ca](http://ihsa.ca) website and see how we can help. IHSA has training courses, products, and sections of the website that cater specifically to small businesses. You are automatically a member of IHSA if you are employed with a firm that pays premiums to the WSIB in Ontario. Visit <https://www.ihsa.ca/About.aspx> to learn more.