

Pull
out



Health
& Safety
Guide for

Independent business owners



Is this you?

You work harder than any of your friends. You don't have time for dinner some evenings. You may be paying down a mortgage, leasing equipment, and struggling to make ends meet.

You're trying to compete with companies that do cash deals with no contract. They also don't pay taxes. You've been outbid by them before. But you're proud of your business and how far you've come. You've become an expert at a lot of things. You can direct the work and do the work.

Safety is probably far from your mind. Not because you don't care, but because you're too busy.

We at IHSA understand where you're coming from. Some of us were business owners like you. We want to give you some tips that won't take much time, but can make you both safer and more competitive.

It turns out that taking some steps to prevent a workplace tragedy is not only the right thing to do ethically, it's the smart thing to do financially.

Give us five minutes, turn the page, and see why safety should matter to you.

Why **safety** matters for business

You've sacrificed a lot to build your business—financially and personally. Protect your investment.

Profits and losses

Imagine one of your employees stumbles on some garbage, twists a knee and can't work for a few days. We calculated that the immediate, direct costs to you would be about \$3,800, and that doesn't include any WSIB surcharge, Ministry of Labour fine, penalties for production delays, or accommodation of the injured worker after returning to the job.

If you're working at a 10% profit margin, you'd have to do \$38,000 worth of business just to recoup your direct costs of this relatively minor injury.

Now, imagine if on top of that, you're slapped with a \$50,000 Ministry of Labour fine (the maximum fine is actually \$500,000). **You'd have to do over half a million dollars of business** just to recoup that amount (while not making a profit). How long would that take? Would it have been worth a few minutes to clean up the work area?

Winning the big bids

Are you looking to land some big contracts? If so, then increasingly, clients are going to ask you for evidence of a good safety record. They may also ask to see your health and safety policy and program. Prepare your business for a more safety-conscious market.

Quality work is safe work

Doing the job safely can improve quality and productivity. For example, cutting tile using a water saw means greater accuracy and increased volume of work compared to conventional methods that create a dust hazard.



Company fined!

In March 2011, a company was fined \$65,000 for violations of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. During a routine inspection, a Ministry of Labour inspector noticed that entranceways to and from the work area were obstructed and issued an order to keep the routes clear. When the inspector visited the site the next day, the entranceways were still not clear. The company was fined a total of \$65,000 on two counts, even though no one was injured.

Keeping workers safe frees them to remain focused on the job—rather than being distracted because they have to watch out for hazards.

You'll find that the same bad attitudes that lead to safety problems (recklessness, carelessness, etc.) also lead to quality problems. Professionals take their job, and their safety, seriously.

Business with a heart

So far we've given some "business" arguments for health and safety, but they're not the whole story. There's an even more convincing argument: health and safety matters because human lives matter.

If you're like many independent business owners, you've known your workers for years. They're probably like a second family to you—if they aren't actually your sons or daughters. That's reason enough to make health and safety part of your business. The next two pages show you how.

Eight best practices

1. Know the hazards

You can't prevent injuries and illness unless you know what can go wrong.

Beware of the most common hazards. Make sure your workers know what they are. For the industries served by IHSA, the top three hazards overall are

- musculoskeletal hazards (e.g., repetitive strain, improper lifting)
- struck-by hazards (e.g., backing vehicles, misuse of tools)
- falls (e.g., working without guardrails, floor openings, not tying off).

Figure out how injuries or illnesses are most likely to happen in your current jobs, and prevent these problems. The best way to do this is to perform a "job safety analysis" for each activity:

1. Write down the steps of the job, as well as surrounding conditions that matter for safety.
2. Identify the hazards associated with each step or the surrounding conditions.
3. Determine controls for each hazard. Put the controls in place.
4. Inform your workers about hazards and controls.

2. Know the rules

As a business owner and employer, you have legal responsibilities. Know the law and regulations that apply to you and your industry. It's either Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (and relevant regulations) for provincially regulated businesses, or the *Canada Labour Code* for federally regulated businesses.

- IHSA can help you find a copy of the law relevant to you, either on paper or online. Visit www.ihsa.ca

3. Get trained and provide training

- Ensure that you and your workers have the health and safety training you need for the work you do.
- Generic training ensures workers have the general knowledge and understanding to identify risks in the workplace. IHSA's WHMIS program is an example. Generic training usually requires follow-up training by the employer on workplace-specific applications.
- Workplace-specific training may involve education on specific methods, machinery, tools, or applications related to a person's work. It is often required for situations where dangerous circumstances can arise, such as trenching, confined spaces, working at heights, or traffic control.
- New worker orientation and training is critical because new workers have a greater chance of injury. "New worker" doesn't mean only young workers. It can mean a worker who is new to a particular job or jobsite.

4. Ensure "competent supervision"

Employers are obligated to hire competent supervisors, but if your business is small, you may be the supervisor.

Either you or the supervisor must

- inspect the workplace regularly, document what you find, and ensure that hazards are being controlled
- investigate workplace injuries or illness so they don't happen again
- enforce company rules as well as health and safety laws and regulations.

Continued on the next page

Eight best practices continued

5. Talk about safety with your employees

Communicate the importance of safety using

- 5-minute safety talks. These are quick briefings before a day's work. Think ahead about what you and your employees will be doing, and cover off the hazards and controls. IHSA offers over 80 free safety talks on www.ihsa.ca
- posters, signs, and articles (from this magazine, or from our free monthly email bulletin)—post them where your workers gather
- written communications when you're setting out policy or when specific procedures must be followed
- informal discussions throughout the day, which show your workers that you genuinely care about their safety.

6. Integrate safety into your business

- Safety isn't a burden when it's a seamless part of your regular work. When you're inspecting for quality, inspect for safety. When you're giving people their work assignments, remind them about hazards and controls associated with the work.
- Write out a safety policy and give your staff time to read it. Download samples from www.ihsa.ca.
- Like any other aspect of a business, health and safety must be managed systematically to ensure quality. You need a health and safety program, which is a practical plan for implementing your policy. It covers the specifics of your work. There's a wealth of information that you can use to build a safety program on www.ihsa.ca. Or call us for a free consultation with one of our field consultants.

7. Lead by example

- Actions speak louder than words. Follow all the health and safety rules. If you don't, your employees may think they don't matter.
- Take action to correct unsafe conditions. If you don't have the expertise within your company, seek help. Start with a call to IHSA.
- Reward employees who do the job safely.

8. Get to know IHSA's resources

IHSA offers training that is appropriate for owners of independent businesses through courses such as

- *Basics of Supervising* (available in a home-study format)
- *Contractor Safety Essentials*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- *Canada Labour Code Part II*
- *Highway Traffic Act*
- and many more.

Visit www.ihsa.ca for details.

Subscribe to our free monthly email bulletin *2-Minute News*. It gives you a heads-up about things such as Ministry of Labour blitzes, and each issue provides material for a safety talk. As the name suggests, you can read the info about your industry in two minutes or less. Sign up at www.ihsa.ca or email info@ihsa.ca.

Visit www.ihsa.ca and see the wealth of web tutorials, manuals, posters, and other resources on preventing injuries and illness.