



Best practices

for small business owners



Just like larger companies, small business owners must protect themselves and their workers from workplace hazards by following the legislation and industry best practices. In some ways, small businesses need to be more aware of standard health and safety practices because they likely won't have a health and safety manager or supervisor planning and organizing the work.

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

1. Know the hazards

As a professional, you know your job and you have your plans prepared. You also know what can go wrong. Part of your job plan should be to think about the hazards you might face while performing that job.



For the industries served by IHSA, the top three hazards are:

1. Musculoskeletal hazards (repetitive strain injuries, improper lifting techniques, etc.)
2. Struck-bys (being hit by falling or flying objects, moving equipment, backing vehicles, etc.)
3. Falls (improper fall protection, falling from heights, falling through floor openings, etc.).

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

1. Write down the steps of the job, as well as any working conditions that would have an impact on safety.
2. Identify any hazards associated with each job step or working condition.
3. Decide if the hazard can be eliminated.
4. If not, put controls in place to help prevent these hazards).
5. Communicate the JSA to your workers.

For a blank template of a JSA, visit the **Resources for Small Businesses** page at ihsa.ca/ihsa.ca/smallbusiness/resources_small-businesses.aspx

2. Know the rules

For small business owners, it's important to know and understand the health and safety laws and regulations that apply to your company, your industry, and your workers. It can be the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (for provincially regulated firms), or the *Canada Labour Code, Part II* (for federally regulated firms), and the relevant regulations that go under them.



For example, the federal CLC requires every employer to develop, implement, and monitor a workplace hazard prevention program, whereas 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

helpful resources on 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

3. Get the training

Depending on the type of work you do, you and your workers must have certain training to meet the health and safety requirements.

Generic training ensures workers have the general knowledge and understanding to identify risks in the workplace. It usually requires follow-up training by the employer on workplace-specific applications (e.g., WHMIS training.).

Workplace-specific training may involve education on specific methods, machinery, tools, or applications related to a person's work. It is often required for high-risk work such as working at heights, working on overhead powerlines, or operating large trucks and heavy equipment.

New worker orientation and training is critical because new workers have a greater chance of injury. "New worker" does not only mean young workers. It can mean a worker who is new to a particular job or jobsite.

4. Get a competent supervisor

Employers are obligated to appoint competent supervisors, but for many small businesses, the employer is also a supervisor.

As defined by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, a competent person is qualified because of knowledge, training, and experience to organize the work and its performance. So a competent supervisor should have some supervisory training, such as IHSA's *Basics of Supervising*

course. (See the *Health and Safety Guide for Supervisors* on pages 12-13.)



5. Build safety into your business

Talking about health and safety and putting signs and posters around a jobsite shows 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 continually have to remind them to do.

Safety talks are a great way to start the workday and a good reminder for your employees to work safe. Visit IHSA's **Safety Talks** web page for over a hundred safety talks you can download for free: ihsa.ca/resources/safetytalks.aspx

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

6. Know what's available to you

Your IHSA membership entitles you to take training courses for free or at a reduced charge and to access many printed and downloadable health and safety products.

IHSA training courses that cater specifically to small businesses include the following.

- *Basics of Supervising* (classroom or home-study)
- *Construction Health and Safety Basic* (classroom or home-study)
- *Contractor Safety Essentials*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- *Canada Labour Code Part II*
- *Highway Traffic Act*

