



A safe start for small businesses

How IHSA connects with new small business members to improve their health and safety outlook.

Ontario's economy is powered by small businesses. They are the majority of employers in the province's construction, aggregates, transportation, and electrical utilities sectors. They make up more than 90 percent of the 160,000-plus businesses that IHSA serves.

Roughly 1,000 new small businesses join IHSA's membership each month. Which means that IHSA has 1,000 monthly opportunities to spread our message: Work safe for life.

Helping our small business members protect their workers and achieve health and safety compliance is one of IHSA's core objectives. We do that by removing financial barriers: for example, many of our valuable safe-work manuals and guidelines—and some training courses—are available for free to members. We also work to make our training convenient and accessible to small business owners and contractors, who can't always take time off from the jobsite to earn a certificate.

But sometimes, it's lack of awareness that holds companies back from health and safety excellence. Employers and workers, especially if they're relative newcomers to their industry, simply may not know all that they need to know. Or they don't know where to get that knowledge.

Connecting with small businesses sooner

IHSA ensures that health and safety is always top-of-mind at smaller firms through consistent, targeted outreach and engagement.

When an Ontario business registers with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), it automatically becomes a member of IHSA if it's in the sectors that we support—gaining immediate access to all our resources, training programs, and other services.

The past year has marked a turning point in how and when we connect with these newly registered IHSA members.

The WSIB now gives IHSA a list of newly registered firms every month, which means our Health and Safety Small Business Advisors can quickly reach out to new members to offer support, direct them to our free-to-member resources, and connect them with our regional health and safety consultants.

Resources and support, right from the start

What does that outreach look like? We contact 100 per cent of these companies by email within 30 days of receiving their information from the WSIB. In that introductory communication, businesses receive a link to IHSA's dedicated small business welcome page, which provides direct access to:

- Information on IHSA's role in Ontario's health and safety system
- Free training courses, eLearning programs, and downloadable resources
- Small business-focused episodes of the *IHSA Safety Podcast*
- The *IHSA Construction Safety App*, with legislation on more than 50 workplace health and safety topics

We also mail out a special edition of *IHSA Health and Safety Magazine*, featuring even more valuable information for small businesses.

The data show that this information is in high demand. The average open rate for our introductory email exceeds 70 per cent, far higher than the 30- to 40-per cent benchmark that's considered typical for outreach campaigns in the not-for-profit sector.

After setting up newly registered firms for success, we continue to follow up and offer support. IHSA Health and Safety Small Business Advisors contact approximately 5,000 small firms annually by phone—to clarify member benefits, share resources, offer tailored advice, and provide connections to local subject matter experts and consultants.

Upon request, companies are also mailed IHSA's small business starter kit, which includes our *Contractor's Toolkit* (B045), *Safety Talks Manual* (V005), first aid kit inspection card sticker (S103), and jobsite health and safety posters.

Ongoing engagement to keep safety current

Throughout their first year in business, all new IHSA small business members receive up to six additional emails with information tailored to their needs.



Within 30 days of receiving registration information from the WSIB:

- All **newly registered firms** receive an introductory email with a link to IHSA's Small Business webpage and an overview of valuable IHSA products and services. Each firm also receives a special edition of *IHSA Health and Safety Magazine* with information and resources for small businesses.

Following this initial email outreach:

- **Firms receive a phone call directly** from an IHSA Health and Safety Small Business Advisor to establish a personal connection.
- **Firms are mailed a Small Business Starter Kit**, upon request, which includes our *Contractor's Toolkit* (BO45), *Safety Talks Manual* (V005), first aid kit inspection card sticker (S103), and posters.

Within one year of registering:

- All newly registered firms receive up to six additional emails with information tailored to their needs. Topics include IHSA's free-to-member resources, location-specific operations, health and safety consultants, and *Occupational Health and Safety Act* compliance.

After their first year in business:

- Companies are automatically subscribed to IHSA's small business e-newsletter and introduced to IHSA consultants and services in their region.

These communications may highlight topics such as IHSA's free-to-member resources, our regional operations and health and safety consultants, low-cost eLearning options, and updates related to *Occupational Health and Safety Act* or *Canada Labour Code, Part II* compliance.

And then, 12 months from their WSIB registration date, companies are automatically subscribed to IHSA's monthly small business email, ensuring they're kept up to date on new IHSA products, events, training opportunities, and health and safety videos and podcasts.

The latter are significant elements in IHSA's overall digital engagement strategy, which also includes consistent communication through social media.

For example, we recently launched a series of *Ask a Construction Health and Safety Expert* Q&A videos, designed to address common health and safety questions for new small businesses in the construction sector. The videos look at topics such as mandatory training, hazard assessment, and building a health and safety program—all of which are necessary for small businesses to comply with health and safety laws in Ontario.

Small businesses can also find short-form video content, including safety talk videos, a series of safe winter driving videos, and other bite-sized tips, on IHSA's YouTube channel.

We've also invested in targeted social media content to reach small business owners on the platforms they use everyday. With a quick scroll through our social channels, small businesses can find compliance updates, read about new products, resources, and events, and learn about the services and supports available to them as they advance along their health and safety journey.

By maintaining constant contact with small businesses, we can better understand their evolving needs and tailor our products and services accordingly. Multiple points of connection ensure that access to vital health and safety support is convenient and straightforward.

IHSA members know that working safely is the right thing to do. With our improved outreach, more members can build on that knowledge and put it into action—to protect themselves, their workers, and their business. ■