

INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM



The INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM (IRS), the underlying principle of many health and safety programs, can effectively lead to continued improvement in the safety culture. Everyone is personally and directly responsible for health and safety as an intrinsic part of their job. Work and health and safety (H&S) are not separate activities. The IRS needs to be established, promoted and improved over time to result in progressively longer intervals between accidents or work-related illnesses.

Keys to a Successful IRS

- Everyone must acknowledge that health and safety is an essential part of doing his or her job.
- Everyone must acknowledge that accidents and illnesses have causes that can be eliminated or greatly reduced by investigating and taking correction action.
- Everyone should be able to carry out their responsibilities by being aware of the hazards associated with their job and their own skill, ability, and limitations.
- An individual must strive to improve work processes to reduce risk, which might include cooperating with others when the risk cannot be reduced or eliminated by themselves.
- Everyone must understand the IRS process, believe in it, and take steps to make it effective at all levels in the organization.
- No one should be fearful of reprisals when using IRS processes.



NOTES

The Three Basic Rights of all Workers:

The Right to Know the hazards present in their workplace

The Right to Participate to keep the workplace safe and healthy

The Right to Refuse unsafe work

Roles of Workplace Parties

The IRS relies on everyone in a workplace to be responsible for safety. Each workplace party must exercise their due diligence by playing a role in the IRS.

Roles of an Employer

- Establishing a health and safety policy
- Ensuring the development of an H&S system
- Responding properly to reports by managers
- Ensuring that a proper IRS is functioning
- Ensuring that competent professionals are hired
- Leadership – taking initiative; inspiring others
- Holding subordinates accountable

Roles of Supervisors and Managers

- Using initiative to reduce risk
- Applying discretion to solve H&S problems
- Responding properly to reports
- Encouraging reports
- Training
- Ensuring qualifications
- Coaching
- Job observation
- Job planning
- Enforcement of rules and regulations
- Discipline
- Working cooperatively with workers, other supervisors, managers and others in the organization
- Taking unresolved problems to senior management
- Engaging in leadership activities for H&S
- H&S performance evaluation

Roles of a Worker

- Following regulatory procedures
- Following employer's procedures
- Following supervisor's procedures
- Identifying defects, contraventions and dangers
- Using initiative to reduce risk
- Reporting unresolved problems
- Working cooperatively with co-workers, supervisors and others

Raising Safety Concerns

Individuals with specific safety questions or concerns should raise them with their immediate supervisor. Dealing with safety issues through the supervisory chain of command is the preferred method, however, when this approach is unsuccessful in resolving a safety issue, concerns may be raised by direct contact with a Joint Health and Safety Committee member or the Director, Safety, Health, Environment & Risk Management. These individuals, on request, keep the name of a complainant confidential, however, in some instances, this constraint may prevent thorough investigation and resolution of a complaint. A worker cannot be punished for raising a safety concern at the workplace.

If you require further information on the topic presented by your **Health and Safety Champion**, visit our website or email Christine Haywood at chaywood@wlu.ca