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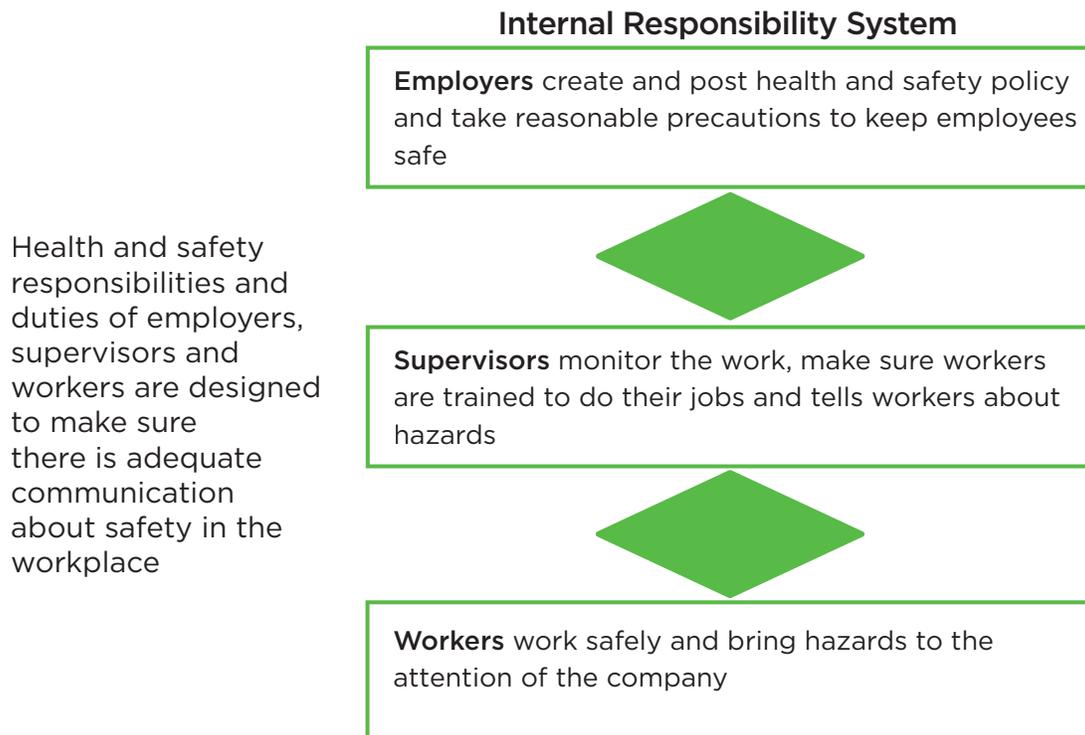
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## Introduction

The Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is part of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*. Very simply put, the IRS is all about teamwork.

Everyone in the workplace has a shared responsibility to make sure that the workplace is healthy and safe for everyone, from senior management to the worker.

The graphic below shows the basic relationship and some general responsibilities for employers, supervisors and workers in the IRS:



## Employer Duties

*OHSA* ss.25 and 26 assign a mixture of general and specific duties to employers and provide for other duties to be prescribed by regulation. The **general duties** require an employer to:

- Take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of workers
- Ensure that equipment, materials and protective equipment are maintained in good condition
- Provide information, instruction and supervision to protect worker health and safety
- Co-operate with the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or Health and Safety Representative
- Appoint competent supervisors

The **specific duties** require an employer to:

- Comply with all regulations made under the *OHSA*
- Develop and implement a health and safety program and policy
- Post a copy of the *OHSA* in the workplace
- Provide health and safety reports to the JHSC

*OHSA* s.26 details a number of other areas where additional duties for an employer may be required by a regulation.

### Supervisor Duties (OHSА s.27)

- Work in compliance with the OHSА and regulations
- Use any equipment, protective devices or clothing required by the employer
- Once the existence of a hazard is known, tell the workers of any potential or actual hazard to health and safety of the worker
- Take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of workers
- Where required by legislation, provide written instructions about measures and procedures in place for the protection of the worker

### Worker Duties and Rights (OHSА s.28)

Workers have a **general duty** to take responsibility for personal health and safety, which means they should not behave or operate equipment in a way that would endanger themselves or others.

s.28 of OHSА lists additional specific duties:

- Work in compliance with the OHSА and regulations
- Use any equipment, protective devices or clothing required by the employer
- Tell the employer or supervisor about any known missing or defective equipment or protective device that may cause danger
- Report any known workplace hazard or violation of the OHSА to the employer or supervisor
- Not remove or make ineffective any protective device required by the employer or by the regulations

The *OHSA* assigns three basic rights to every worker:

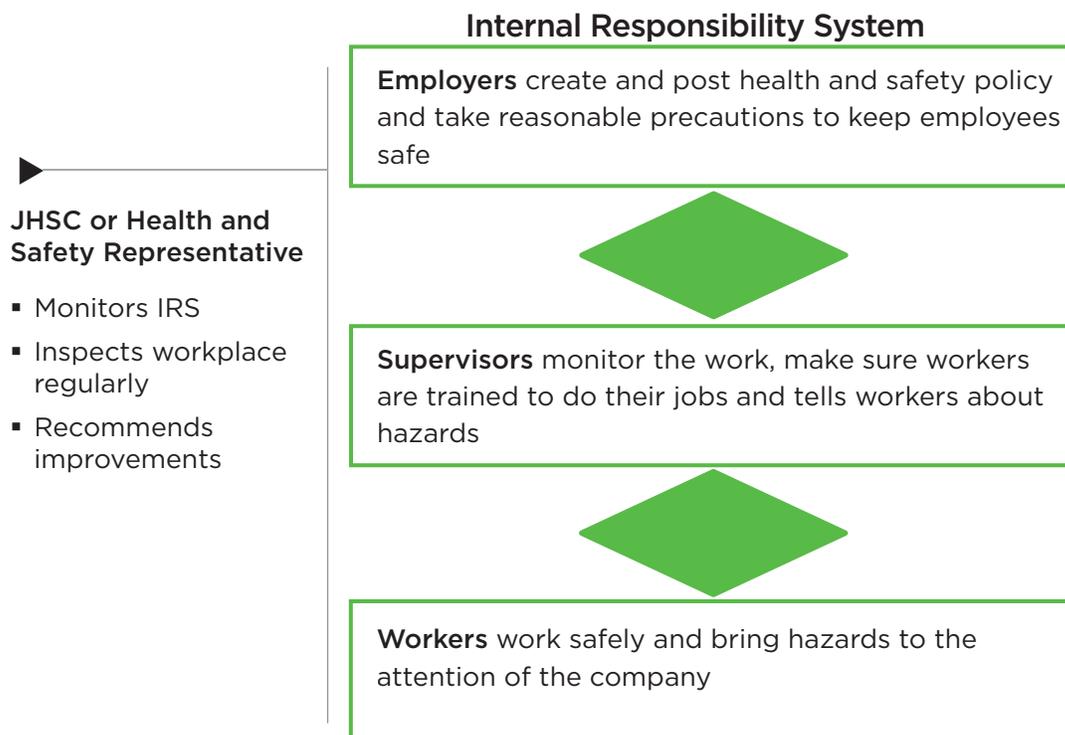
1. **The right to know.** Workers have the right to know the hazards in their job. An employer or supervisor must tell them about anything in the job that can hurt them.
2. **The right to participate.** Everyone has the right to take part in keeping the workplace healthy and safe. A worker, depending on the size of the company may become part of the Joint Health and Safety Committee or be appointed a health and safety representative. Everyone has the right to participate in training and information sessions to help them do their job safely.
3. **The right to refuse unsafe work.** If a worker believes their job is likely to endanger someone else or themselves, they have an obligation to report the unsafe situation to management. If the situation is not corrected and they feel that their health and safety is still in danger, they have the right under the *OHSA* to refuse to perform the work without reprisal.

There are direct and indirect responsibilities in the IRS. The table below summarizes the responsibility types in a company's IRS:

Direct IRS Responsibility	Indirect IRS Responsibility
Employer	Joint Health and Safety Committee
Supervisor	Health and Safety Representative
Worker	Union
	Ministry of Labour

## Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative

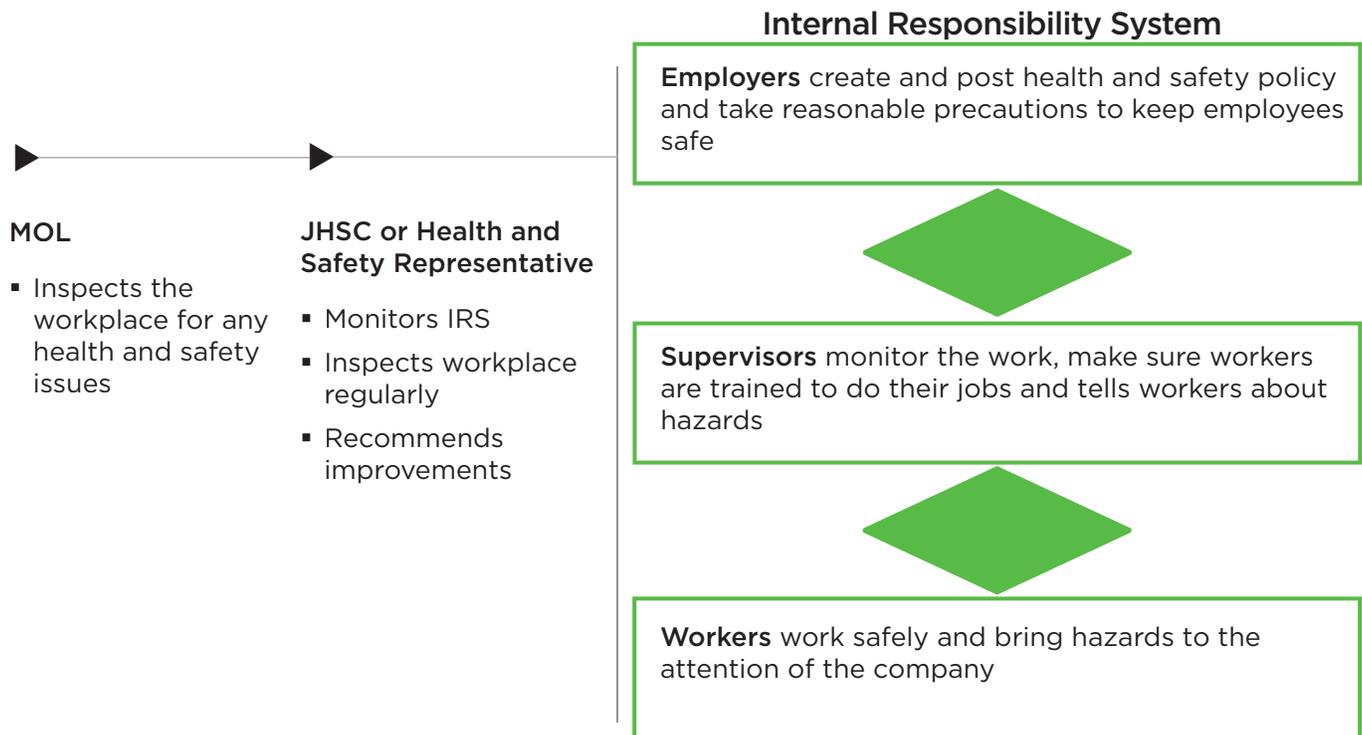
- Monitors the functioning of the IRS and recommends improvements when indicated
- Inspects the workplace for potential or actual hazards
- Investigates critical or fatal incidents
- Monitors the health and safety policies and program
- Acts as a channel of communication between workplace parties
- Acts as a liaison with the Ministry of Labour so that any weaknesses in the IRS and other health and safety concerns can be brought to the attention of the inspector
- Checks to make sure recommended changes are made and maintained



## The Ministry of Labour’s (MOL) Role

The Ministry of Labour’s responsibility in the IRS is to make sure workplaces are complying with the laws under the *OHSA*. Compliance means that the company’s IRS is working to address health and safety issues. They may investigate a hazardous situation, a work refusal, start a prosecution and issue orders to companies to obey the laws in the *OHSA*.

The graphic below shows the indirect function of the MOL in the IRS of a company:



In workplaces where employees are organized, the **union** has an indirect responsibility in the IRS.

### IRS Self Checklist

On the next page is a chart listing some responsibilities and duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* for

- Employers
- Joint Health and Safety Committees and Health and Safety Representatives
- Supervisors
- Workers

Check off the statements that apply to you.

You will be attending the Managing Hazards training session in about one week from now. Your facilitator will speak briefly about this exercise and the IRS Primer in general.

## IRS Primer Self Checklist

I provide written instructions on health and safety measures and procedures to the workers
I comply with my duties and responsibilities under the <i>OHSA</i>
I appoint a competent person as a supervisor
I identify hazards or potential hazards in my workplace and report them
I take every precaution reasonable for the health and safety of workers
I report any person not complying with the <i>OHSA</i> or regulations
I inspect the workplace
I create the health and safety policy and post it
I make sure workers are aware of any potential or actual hazard which could endanger them in their work
I make sure employees wear the proper personal protective equipment
I wear the proper personal protective equipment
I make sure all equipment is maintained in good condition
I make sure workers have the training, information and supervision necessary to do their work safely
I make recommendations to the employer and workers for improvements to increase the health and safety of workers
I can refuse unsafe work if I believe it is dangerous
I must respond to recommendations from the JHSC within 21 days
I work safely with the equipment so I don't harm myself or others
I make sure my workplace complies with, other than the <i>OHSA</i> , any regulatory, code, or guideline affecting my workplace
I must help and co-operate with the Ministry of Labour inspector
I can represent workers at any testing of anything in the workplace where it concerns occupational health and safety
I can ask my employer for information about actual or potential hazards that the employer may know about

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