

# TOOLBOX SAFETY TALK

ASK WHO HAS HEARD OF THE INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM (IRS)?

DOES ANYONE HAVE A RECENT EXAMPLE OF THE IRS IN ACTION?

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## THE INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM

The Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is the foundation of Occupational Health and Safety Legislation in Canada and across the world. Simply put, everyone is responsible for safety.

Under an IRS everyone shares the responsibility for working together to identify and control situations (hazards) that could cause harm. This includes:

- Employers and owners;
- Managers and supervisors;
- Workers; and
- Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC).

The principal of IRS places responsibility for controlling hazards on everyone in the workplace, but also recognizes that those closest to the work can provide valuable input in maintaining a safe workplace.

Everyone can approach safety in the work place through identifying hazards, analyzing the risks those hazards pose, communicating information throughout the workplace about the risks, and controlling those risks.

## IRS IN ACTION

Everyone applies their knowledge to improve health and safety; employers and workers jointly take action to identify and control hazards through co-management of health and safety.

When properly handled, the IRS promotes cooperation among owners, managers, supervisors, workers, and the OHSC. The cooperation from all levels maintains fundamental health and safety standards.

The ultimate objective of IRS is to ensure everyone understands their role in maintaining a healthy and safe worksite, and that action needs to be taken immediately when a risk is identified.

Examples of IRS in action can be something as simple as:

- Immediately cleaning up a spill.
- Picking up a tripping hazard as soon as it is noticed.

To something more complex such as:

- Noting a leak on a piece of equipment that may be a fire hazard, and putting the proper protocols in place to ensure everyone’s safety.

Bottom line: for everyone, don’t walk past a hazard or ignore it. If it can be corrected safely, do it and ask for help if you need it. If it cannot be readily corrected, shut down or lock out the equipment or barricade the area to ensure others will not be at risk. Report the issue to your supervisor and work with him/her to determine the next actions.

## DEMONSTRATE

Revisit the initial question about an example of IRS in action. What are some ways workers recently took responsibility for safety?