

Health and Safety Legislation in Canada

Health and Safety Legislation in Canada - Internal Responsibility System

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What is the Internal Responsibility System?

The internal responsibility system puts in place an employer-worker partnership in ensuring a safe and disease-free workplace. A health and safety committee is a joint forum for employers and employees working together to improve workplace health and safety.

Each person or group shares responsibility for health and safety and should work collaboratively to solve issues and make improvements. Generally speaking, employers are responsible for maintaining policies and procedures to ensure a safe workplace. The worker's role is to follow safe work practices and to report safety hazards.

Legislation includes mechanisms to allow for worker input into the management of health and safety in a workplace. For example, a health and safety committee is a joint forum for employers and workers working together to improve workplace health and safety.

How does the Internal Responsibility System work?

The internal responsibility system is the underlying philosophy of the occupational health and safety legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions. Its foundation is that everyone in the workplace - both workers and employers - is responsible for his or her own safety and for the safety of co-workers. Acts and regulations do not always impose or prescribe the specific steps to take for compliance. Instead, it holds employers responsible for determining such steps to ensure the health and safety of all workers.

The internal responsibility system does the following:

- Establishes responsibility-sharing systems
- Promotes safety culture and communication

- Promotes best practice
- Helps develop self-reliance
- Ensures compliance

Please see the OSH Answers document [Health and Safety Legislation in Canada - Basic Responsibilities](#) for more information.

These general provisions give employers the "freedom" to carry out measures and control procedures that are appropriate for their individual workplaces. On the other hand, the challenge for employers is to know when they have fulfilled all appropriate regulatory requirements. More information about this "challenge" is in the [Due Diligence](#) OSH Answers document.

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