

5 safety best practices for small firms

Kirsi Henry knows that time is a precious resource for a small business owner, so as a WSPS consultant she cuts to the chase: “Pay particular attention to your new and young workers. It’s vital for them and for you: these workers have a higher risk of injury and are most likely to be injured within the first month on the job.”

For owners and managers juggling many roles, Kirsi offers five low- or no-cost best practices to keep new and young workers safe. She also recommends a time-saving new resource that can help small businesses act on these best practices.

1. Get on top of hazards that new and young workers may face before they start working. Check the processes and equipment these workers will be using for potential hazards, update safe work procedures, and tap into the experience of existing employees. Experienced employees often know of additional hazards and have solutions to control workplace risks.

2. During orientation training, spend more time on how to do tasks safely, and less time on administration. “We encourage people to cover health and safety topics first, when employees’ attention is focused and they are best able to absorb new information. Doing this first also tells them health and safety is a priority. So, instead of reviewing every detail of your payroll system, provide a handout that they can refer to.”

3. Ensure everyone understands their health and safety rights and responsibilities. They’re the foundation of Ontario’s Internal Responsibility System, in which everyone in the workplace has a role to play in creating a safe and healthy workplace. “It’s how workplaces develop a culture of safety,” says Kirsi. She recommends starting with mandatory awareness training <http://wsps.ca/Information-Resources/Topics/Mandatory-Awareness-Training.aspx> for workers and supervisors, which is available online for free.

4. Use your time with new and young workers to integrate safety into the conversation. Reinforcing the value of safety during walk-throughs, coaching and staff meetings is a valuable and efficient way to help workers keep safety top of mind. You don’t always need to have formal training sessions to develop safe work habits. In fact, regular reminders, corrections and acknowledgement can be a more effective way to train employees.

5. Be a health and safety role model. “If you believe in health and safety and demonstrate it in everything that you do, employees will notice. When the boss speaks positively about safety and asks questions, workers will be more conscious and prepared to show that they can work safely. It’s human nature to mimic and model the culture in the workplace.”

New time-saving online resource

WSPS has reinvented its online small business centre with a fresh look and, more importantly, new resources to help you develop the pillars of their health and safety program. “It’s very intuitive and easy to use,” says Kirsi. “We’ve really focused on core compliance requirements. Whether you want to enhance your program or you have an MOL order to comply with, our small business website can help.

The new website, <http://www.wsps.ca/smallbusiness>, has health and safety roadmaps based on company size. “Click on a size that reflects your business, and the website populates itself with resources specific to your needs.”

Here's just a sampling of the resources you'll find on WSPS' small business website:

- Safety checklist
- duties and responsibilities
- orientation training checklist
- training tips for workers
- workplace violence and harassment policy templates
- WHMIS information
- first aid kit requirements

"These are all time-saving tools that people can download and customize," explains Kirsi.

Start saving time. Bookmark <http://www.wsps.ca/smallbusiness> now.

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