

## How your health and safety rep can help keep your business humming

Imagine your business running smoothly - no equipment failure and no injuries (or worse) - and being able to focus 100% on serving your customers. Investing in business interruption insurance is one way to cover yourself after incurring a loss, but by making a small investment in your health and safety representative (HSR) you can help prevent losses from happening at all.

Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* requires HSRs in workplaces with 6 to 19 regularly employed workers.

"HSRs are more than a legal obligation," says Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) Small Business Manager Kirsi Henry. "With proper training and support, they're a vital resource in keeping your workplace healthy and safe, and preventing disruption and loss due to preventable incidents and injuries."

For instance, HSRs can:

- provide an extra pair of eyes and ears to help identify hazards through activities such as workplace inspections, accident investigations and analysis.
- offer informed insights and ideas on how to prevent injuries and loss by controlling hazards and improving your programs and procedures.
- support your health and safety culture by promoting the internal responsibility system.

### 5 ways to promote your HSR's effectiveness

The key to maximizing the value of your HSR is to provide them with the tools and resources to do their job. Here's what Kirsi suggests:

- Help them develop competence: provide training so that the HSR understands their role and requirements, and how to do their job effectively.
- Give them enough time to fulfil their responsibilities, such as conducting monthly workplace inspections and submitting recommendations.
- Engage with them. Ask questions, share ideas and discuss your thoughts on issues they identify.
- Recognize the HSR's contribution to your workplace's health and safety culture, but make it clear the HSR does not run the health and safety program or enforce policies. This is the employer and supervisor's role.
- Remind all employees that the HSR is one critical component of the internal responsibility system. The HSR will share important observations but can't be expected to identify every hazard in the workplace during a monthly inspection. The best prevention insurance is when the owner and every employee take an active role in workplace health and safety, every day.

For more information and resources, please visit the [WSPS Small Business Centre](#).

This article was prepared by Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS). For more information, visit [www.wsps.ca](http://www.wsps.ca) or contact WSPS at [customercare@wsps.ca](mailto:customercare@wsps.ca).

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