



Self-assessment form

How safe are your church and church hall? Every year, a number of accidents occur in churches, church halls, churchyards and grounds. Not only does this cause pain and suffering to those people who are injured, it can often result in serious disruption to the smooth running of the church and its various activities.

For example, if a cleaner, caretaker, organist or other voluntary or paid member of the church staff is injured and unable to carry out their normal duties, it may be extremely difficult to find a replacement at short notice.

As well as the possibility that the injured person may make a claim against the church for damages in a civil action, criminal prosecutions may be brought against individuals as well as the Parochial Church Council or Trustees under health and safety law where penalties may be as high as a £20,000 fine and two years' imprisonment.

The Incumbent, Churchwardens and other members of the Parochial Church Council have a duty of care to ensure the safety of anyone who may visit the church, hall or churchyard for any purpose. This includes paid employees, voluntary workers, regular members of the congregation, visitors and contractors who may be working on the buildings or in the churchyard.

This questionnaire is designed to help you pinpoint any potentially hazardous areas so that the necessary action may be taken to eliminate or reduce as far as possible any risk of accident.

Additional information regarding any relevant legislation or reference sources is included where appropriate.

If you answer 'NO' to any of the questions, there is a risk that an accident could happen and difficulties could occur in dealing with a claim which might be made against you, so some action on your part is necessary.

Having carried out initial assessments it is important to monitor your health and safety procedures to take account of changing circumstances. This should be a continuing process but at least annually you should go through this questionnaire and take any action necessary.

1 Do you have a written Health and Safety policy?

Yes

No

Health and safety legislation applies to all places of religious worship. The Health and Safety at Work etc, Act 1974 requires every employer with five or more employees to 'prepare and bring to the notice of their employees a written statement of their general policy with respect to the health and safety at work of their employees and the organisation and arrangements for carrying out that policy'. There will be some large churches where the Parochial Church Council actually employs five or more people and in these cases there is no doubt that a written health and safety policy statement is required. Employers with less than five employees are exempt from the requirement for a written health and safety policy. However, the Health and Safety Executive now regards volunteers as employees and persons who make use of volunteers as employers. The same level of training, information and protection must be given to both volunteers and employees. In the light of this it is good practice to have a written policy that sets out your organisation and procedures for health and safety, even if you employ less than five people.

It is the duty of every employee, including part-time employees such as organists, cleaners and caretakers, to take reasonable care for their own safety and that of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions. The person responsible for enforcing the requirements of the legislation is the Environmental Health Officer of the Local Authority.

A health and safety policy for churches is available from Ecclesiastical.

2 Have you carried out a risk assessment as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999?

Yes

No

These regulations require every employer to make 'a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking'. Self-employed persons including clergy, must make an assessment of the risks to their own health and safety and also to the health and safety of persons not in their employment.

Where five or more people are employed a written record must be made of the significant findings of the assessment.

We would advise that it is good practice for all churches to carry out risk assessments and to record the significant findings.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Approved Code of Practice – ISBN 0 7176 2488 9

5 Steps to Risk Assessment – INDG 163 REV 2 HSE Free Leaflet

The Ecclesiastical health and safety policy includes guidance for churches on carrying out risk assessments.

3 Are floor surfaces and floor coverings in good condition and properly maintained?

Yes

No

Slipping, tripping and falling are a major cause of injuries. You must ensure that there are no unexpected changes in floor level, and that floor surfaces are not sunken, cracked or damaged. Particular attention should be given to stone flags, ceramic and clay tiles and wood blocks.

Loose floor coverings, such as mats and rugs, should be avoided. Carpets must not be worn and must be securely fixed down.

Preventing slips and trips at work – INDG 225 (rev1) HSE Free leaflet

4 Is the churchyard, including paths, steps, ramps, driveways, trees, boundary walls, gravestones and monuments, in good order and properly maintained?

Yes

No

Paths and driveways must be free from potholes and steps must be in good condition. They must be properly drained to prevent collection of rainwater and the growth of algae. Where paths are regularly used at night they must be adequately lit. Steps and steep paths must be fitted with handrails.

Boundary walls and gates must be kept in good repair. Trees must be regularly inspected by a qualified tree surgeon and any necessary remedial work carried out. In addition to the risk of falling branches, an assessment must be made of the risk of damage to neighbouring property caused by the effect of tree roots removing moisture from the surrounding soil.

Although gravestones are the responsibility of the family of the deceased, the church is responsible where the family cannot be traced and also has a general liability for the safety of the churchyard. Gravestones, tombs and monuments must be maintained in a safe condition.

Where churchyards are still in use for burials, care must be taken to ensure that graves left open immediately prior to burials are properly shored up to prevent collapse and are safely covered over.

The Churchyards Handbook – ISBN 0 7151 7583 1 – Available from all Christian bookshops and Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN. Tel 020 7898 1300 Website www.chbookshop.co.uk

5 Are all stairways in good condition and adequately lit?

Yes

No

All stairways in towers or those which give access to organ lofts, galleries, boiler rooms or basements, must be in good condition and be adequately lit. Handrails must also be fitted. Particular attention must be paid to stone spiral staircases in towers where the edges of the steps are often worn. A rope handrail should be fitted as a minimum.

6 Do you allow members of the public to climb the tower or visit other high levels and if so do you have written procedures which are always followed?

Yes

No

Careful consideration must be given before allowing members of the public to climb the tower or visit other high levels in the church. An assessment must be carried out looking into all aspects of the proposed route and detailed guidelines drawn up.

See Tower tours section on page 15.

7 Have assessments been carried out of areas where there is a risk of falls from a height and the appropriate measures taken?

Yes

No

Some churches contain areas where there is a risk of falls from a height such as staircases to former rood screens which have now been removed and where there is low parapeting or castellations along the tops of external walls. Consideration will need to be given to the need to install permanent rails or barriers or safety lathways for use with safety harnesses. The fixing of anchor points for ladders may be sufficient where access is only occasionally required for maintenance purposes, such as the changing of light bulbs or the cleaning of gutters. In other circumstances, the installation of lathways or fixed anchor points and the use of safety harnesses or the use of tower scaffolds or mobile elevated work platforms may be necessary.

8 Has an assessment been made of the risks to the health and safety of bellringers and other persons entering the ringing room and bell chamber?

Yes

No

Under normal circumstances bells should be left in the 'down' position other than when being rung.

Consideration must also be given to the means of escape in the event of an emergency, the evacuation of an injured person, providing a safe means of heating, the provision of fire extinguishers, the provision of emergency lighting and the notification of safety procedures to visiting bellringers.

See Conditions of use applying to change – ringing bells on page 37.

9 Have you carried out an assessment of all substances hazardous to health, and put in place control measures where necessary as required by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (as amended)?

Yes

No

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 requires that 'an employer shall not carry on any work which is liable to expose any employees to any substance hazardous to health, unless he has made a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks created by that work to the health of those employees, and of the steps that need to be taken to meet the requirements of these regulations'.

Substances most likely to be found in churches are petrol, pesticides, insecticides, weedkillers, fertilisers and liquid petroleum gases.

All hazardous substances must be stored and used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Consideration should be given to replacing dangerous substances with less-hazardous alternatives.

An assessment would need to be made before the removal of pigeon droppings which are often found in large quantities in towers and which can cause the disease psittacosis. This needs to be treated as a hazardous substance and specialist advice obtained.

10 Have you carried out an assessment and survey, if necessary, to determine the location and condition of any asbestos and prepared a management plan to enable asbestos to either remain safely on the premises or to be removed in accordance with regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006?

Yes

No

Some churches may still have asbestos used for insulation, lagging, fire protection or in wall and roof linings. Asbestos is often found in organ blower motor housings. If any removal of asbestos materials is required, this work can only be carried out by contractors licensed by the HSE for asbestos removal.

The management of asbestos in non-domestic premises, Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 – ISBN 9780717662098.

11 Are all electrical systems including wiring, switchgear and any fixed machinery such as organ blower motors and all portable electrical appliances in good condition and properly maintained as required by the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989?

Yes

No

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 require that all electrical systems shall be of such design, construction and installation as to prevent danger.

The Church Buildings Council recommends that fixed installations should be inspected and tested at five-yearly intervals.

Portable electrical appliances need to be examined at regular intervals with the frequency of such examinations being set by experience. This will probably need to be at least annually, with equipment which is subject to heavy usage, such as vacuum cleaners, needing to be examined more frequently.

External lighting including floodlighting and associated wiring must be installed to IEE Regulations (BS 7671). Temporary wiring is not acceptable.

HSE Guide *Maintaining Portable and Transportable Electrical Equipment*:
1994 HSG 107 – ISBN 0 7176 2805 1

HSR25 *Memorandum of Guidance on the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989* –
ISBN 9 7807 1766 2289

Requirements for electrical installations. IEE Wiring Regulations. 17th Edition.
BS 7671 – ISBN 978 086341 844 0

12 Do you have formal safety procedures in place if your church is used for public performances and for major services at Christmas and Easter?

Yes

No

If your church is regularly used for large concerts and services, a written procedure should be in place detailing such matters as the number of stewards required and their duties. The procedures should include a detailed evacuation plan. Consideration will need to be given to the installation of an automatic fire alarm system, the use of the public address system for the giving of instructions in the event of an emergency, the installation of emergency lighting, and the training of stewards and other staff or volunteers in the use of firefighting equipment.

13 Do you have regular inspections of lifting equipment?

Yes

No

Many churches have large, heavy ornate font covers which are raised and lowered by a system of pulleys and counterweights. Similar mechanisms are also used to raise and lower candelabra and sanctuary lamps. Other lifting equipment in the building may include passenger lifts and hoists. The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 require such items to be inspected by a competent person at prescribed statutory intervals. An Engineering Insurance Company surveyor would be a competent person.

Safe use of Lifting Equipment. Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. HSE – L113 – ISBN 0 7176 1628 2

INDG290 Simple guide to the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 – ISBN 0 7176 2430 7

14 Has an assessment been carried out to ensure there is no risk of injury from glass in doors and windows?

Yes

No

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 Approved Code of Practice requires that safety glazing is used in all windows below waist height and in (or next to) doors below shoulder height or elsewhere if there is a likelihood of injury. Safety glass includes toughened or laminated glass. Alternatively barriers may be used to prevent persons falling through vulnerable windows. Church halls built during the 1960s and 1970s may well include low-level windows and doors which will need to be upgraded to comply with the regulations.

Workplace Health Safety and Welfare HSE L24 – ISBN 0 7176 0413 6

INDG244 (rev2) Workplace health, safety and welfare – ISBN 978 0 7176 6277 7

15 Is all plant and machinery in good condition and regularly maintained and are all tools and other items of equipment such as ladders, scaffolding towers and staging routinely checked and repaired?

Yes

No

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 require assessments to be carried out to ensure that all work equipment is suitable for the purpose and is adequately maintained. People using the equipment must be given adequate instructions, information and training.

Suitable inspections need to be carried out by a suitably qualified person if work equipment is likely to become unsafe due to the environment, damage or wear.

Boilers should be regularly serviced. Gas boilers should be checked annually by a Gas Safe Registered installer. Lawnmowers and other items of churchyard maintenance equipment must be regularly checked and serviced. Young persons must not be allowed to operate any machinery without proper instruction and supervision. Personal protective equipment, such as visors for use with strimmers, must be available and be maintained.

Safe Use of Work Equipment HSE L22 – ISBN 978 07176 62951

INDG291 Simple guide to the Provision and use of work equipment Regulations 1998

16 Has an assessment been carried out into any manual handling operations?

Yes

No

In many churches, there is a constant moving of chairs, staging, pianos and so on to cater for different layouts and services.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) require assessments to be carried out of all manual handling operations. If possible manual handling should be avoided altogether. Where this is not possible, training should be given and the risk must be reduced as far as possible by the use of mechanical aids and manual handling kept to an absolute minimum.

Manual Handling HSE L23 – ISBN 0 7176 2823 X

INDG143 (rev2) Getting to grips with manual handling – ISBN 0 7176 2828 0

17 Has an assessment been carried out on any catering undertaken to ensure compliance with food hygiene regulations?

Yes

No

Catering in churches can range from a one-off event, such as the annual fête, to the regular provision of meals on a daily basis. The Food Standards Agency has produced detailed guidance on the requirements of food hygiene legislation that can be freely downloaded from their website, www.food.gov.uk. Premises which are used occasionally for food preparation must follow the guidelines for temporary premises. Where food is prepared on a regular basis the General Requirements will need to be followed and you may need to register with the Environmental Health Department of the Local Authority.

FSA Guidance on the Requirements of Food Hygiene Legislation

18 Do you have systems in place for the recording of accidents and the reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences?

Yes

No

The HSE *Accident Book* – ISBN 0 7176 2603 2 Ref BI 510 satisfies the regulations about keeping records of accidents to people at work. The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) requires employers and people in control of premises to report certain types of injury, occupational ill health and dangerous occurrences to their enforcing authority. For places of public worship this is the Local Environmental Health Department. Records of accidents to members of staff, volunteers and visitors must be kept.

If possible you should obtain written statements from any witnesses and record their names and addresses. In the case of back, neck and other serious injuries the injured person should be required to visit their General Practitioner as soon as possible.

A Guide to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 – HSE L73 – ISBN 978 07176 62906

19 Do you have procedures in place for the vetting of persons working with children and young people?

Yes

No

It is most important that adequate safeguards are taken in the selection of persons wishing to work with children. Anyone with a history of child abuse must not be allowed to come into contact with young people.

The House of Bishops has produced a policy on Child Protection and your Diocese will have a Child Protection policy which you should adopt. The Diocesan Child Protection Officer will be able to advise you and explain the Diocesan Child Protection policy.

The guidelines in the Home Office publication *Safe from Harm* should be followed.

Another useful publication is: *Safe and Alert – Good practice advice on volunteers working with vulnerable clients*. Available from the National Centre for Volunteering. Tel 020 7520 8910

20 Do you have procedures in place for fêtes and other outdoor activities?

Yes

No

There are various hazards involved with such things as bouncy castles, fireworks and charity walks. Certain events such as abseiling down towers will require specialist advice.

Ecclesiastical publishes guidance notes on Church functions with sections relating to a number of activities. These include:

- the use of inflatable bouncy castles
- the organisation of bonfire and firework displays
- the organisation of charity walks.

21 Do you have an individual with responsibility for health and safety matters?

Yes

No

We would suggest that every Parochial Church Council appoints a member with specific responsibility for health and safety. This person should lead a small sub-committee, who should be given the responsibility of carrying out the various assessments outlined above and reporting back to the full PCC.

It should be remembered that a Faculty will be needed for most alterations to the fabric of the building.

22 Have you carried out an assessment of your buildings to ensure they can be used by persons with disabilities?

Yes

No

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires that all disabled persons are able to use a building and have access to the services provided within it.

Service providers, which includes churches, have to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people and to provide reasonable means of avoiding physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use its services.

It should also be remembered that a Faculty will be required for most alterations made to the fabric of the building.

Code of Practice: Rights of access services to the public, public authority functions, private clubs and premises – ISBN 9780117036956

23 Have you carried out a fire risk assessment?

Yes

No

It is a requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, that you undertake a fire risk assessment and that a responsible person oversees fire safety.

To comply with regulations you must:

- assess the fire risks in the church. If you have five or more employees you must record the findings of the risk assessment, although we would strongly recommend recording irrespective of the number of employees
- check that a fire can be detected in a reasonable time and that people can be warned
- check that people who may be in the building can get out safely
- provide reasonable firefighting equipment
- check that those in the building know what to do if there is a fire
- check and maintain your fire safety equipment
- check what effect a fire would have on your neighbours.

If you have already taken sensible and appropriate fire safety measures, little or no further action may be necessary.

Further guidance is available from www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk

Free advice is also available from your local fire brigade who are responsible for enforcing the regulations. The telephone number for non-emergency calls can be found in your local telephone directory.



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