

Keeping people safe

Health and safety toolkit

Work equipment



Work equipment

Frequently, a range of machinery, hand tools and other equipment is used at many churches. Usually, this is for the maintenance and cleaning of the premises themselves. Examples include hammers, screwdrivers, photocopiers, lifting equipment and access equipment like ladders. In some larger churches, 'workshop-type' equipment is sometimes also used. Examples include pillar drills and some vehicles like ride-on mowers.

All of these types of equipment are commonly referred to as 'work equipment'. The term is very broad and includes any machinery, appliance, apparatus, tool or installation for use at work (whether exclusively or not). It also includes equipment which employees or volunteers provide for their own use at work. Depending on the type of work equipment, accidents can result in several ways. For example, from contact with moving parts, electrical failures or operator error.

Legal requirements

Generally, if someone is injured you may need to show that you have met your duty of care.

In addition to this, you may have to comply with the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations. These place duties on people who own, operate or have control over work equipment. It also places duties on those whose employees use work equipment, regardless of who owns the equipment. In controlling this equipment, you will only need to comply with the requirements of the Regulations to the extent of your control.

Under these requirements, equipment must be:

- suitable for its intended use
- safe for use, being properly maintained and inspected (if appropriate) to check it is correctly installed and does not deteriorate over time
- used only by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training in its use
- provided with any necessary safeguards and controls (e.g. guards, emergency stop devices, clearly visible markings, warning devices etc.).

Other regulations may also apply where work equipment is used in certain circumstances. Examples include the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations, the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations etc.

Hazards to look out for*

Typical hazards include:

- using equipment incorrectly (e.g. using a chair to stand on)
- broken or damaged equipment
- moving parts of machinery which are not properly guarded
- parts of equipment that can become hot or cold enough to cause burns or scalds
- parts of equipment that are inherently dangerous (e.g. sharp, rough)
- electrical faults on powered equipment (e.g. damaged leads)
- making adjustments whilst equipment is still in use or not switched off
- inadequate information or training for those operating or using equipment
- equipment left where anyone can access it
- unauthorised alterations to equipment (e.g. ladders should not be painted as this can hide defects)
- inadequate lighting.

Precautions you can take*

Typical precautions include:

- using equipment properly and where there are no adverse weather conditions
- providing adequate lighting so that equipment can be used safely
- making sure all safeguards are provided, fitted, used and maintained
- carrying out any necessary pre-use checks
- effective procedures for removing from use faulty or damaged equipment promptly
- ensuring that those who use the equipment are provided with any necessary information and training. In some circumstances and for some types of equipment, a formal qualification may be required (e.g. chainsaw)
- removing keys from equipment when not in use
- storing equipment securely to prevent unauthorised use
- inspecting equipment for wear or damage before use and periodically thereafter
- keeping equipment well-maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- providing personal protective equipment.

* This list is not exhaustive

Making a start

Action	Guidance
<p>1. Identify what work equipment you have in your church and what it is used for.</p> <p>Make a note of this.</p>	<p>Most church premises will have some work equipment. Broadly, this will be used for cleaning (e.g. vacuum cleaners), ‘gardening’ (e.g. lawn mowers, trimmers); and premises maintenance (e.g. hammers, handsaws, drills). Some equipment will be needed for specific tasks (e.g. ladders, scaffolding or access towers for work at height), whilst others will be used in the church buildings themselves (e.g. lifting equipment for font covers).</p> <p>Remember to identify anything your staff and volunteers bring in to use in your church.</p> <p>If you are an employer, you will need to complete formal risk assessments. These should help you identify if the correct equipment is being used for the jobs in hand.</p>
<p>2. Check the precautions you have taken are adequate. If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed and who will be responsible for implementing them.</p> <p>Make a note of your findings and who is responsible for any actions.</p>	<p>The precautions necessary will depend on the types of work equipment you have at your church and the way it is used there. Typical precautions are set out above. However, this list is not exhaustive and others may be needed for your own particular circumstances.</p> <p>Again, if you are an employer and have completed formal risk assessments, these should help you identify if adequate precautions are in place. Here, the risk assessments may be of a general nature or more specific relating to certain types of equipment, tasks or activities.</p> <p>Whatever the case (and where appropriate), check that the equipment is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CE marked and suitable for the task • complete, with all necessary safeguards fitted (e.g. guards) • free from defect • properly installed and is stable (usually fixed down) if necessary • provided with control switches that are clearly marked to show what they do • provided with emergency stop controls where necessary • used in work areas which are kept clean and tidy, free from obstructions or slips and trips hazards, and well lit • issued with any required personal protective equipment (e.g. goggles, hearing protection) if this is necessary to operate the equipment safely. <p>A CE mark is a symbol that indicates that equipment complies with essential health and safety standards. Further information is available at www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/declaration-conformity.htm.</p>

Action	Guidance
<p>3. Ensure that the precautions you have identified are taken and remain effective, including any maintenance and servicing that may be required.</p> <p>Make sure any pre-use checks are carried out where necessary.</p> <p>Make a note of any checks or inspections you make.</p>	<p>Additional hazards can occur when equipment becomes unreliable and it develops faults. Proper checks will allow these faults to be found early whilst periodic maintenance will make sure it remains safe for use. Some equipment may require simple pre-use and daily checks or other periodic inspection as well.</p> <p>Simple hand tools usually require minimal maintenance, but could need repair or replacement over time. More complex, powered equipment will normally be accompanied by a manufacturer's maintenance manual, which specifies routine and special maintenance procedures to be carried out at particular intervals.</p> <p>Maintenance and servicing should only be carried out by people who are competent to do the work.</p> <p>In many cases, you may need to keep records of any maintenance, examination, inspection and test you make.</p>
<p>4. Ensure that employees know how to use work equipment safely.</p> <p>Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.</p>	<p>The level of information and training required will vary depending on the type of equipment and the nature of the work involved. Again, if you have completed formal risk assessments these will help you determine what is necessary.</p> <p>For most churches, tasks are usually low-risk. Here, making sure employees and volunteers receive simple instruction on how to use the equipment safely would be sufficient. In many cases, an understanding of the user instructions affixed to or provided with the equipment would be enough. This may cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any pre-use checks required • the correct use of the equipment including any limitations • the use of any safeguards provided • the use of any protective clothing and equipment required for that machine (e.g. safety glasses, hearing protection etc.). <p>Special consideration might be required for new starters, young people or those with disabilities.</p> <p>All persons required to inspect, repair and maintain equipment should be provided with appropriate training and information.</p> <p>Children and unauthorised, unqualified or untrained people should not be allowed to use machinery.</p>

Action	Guidance
<p>5. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for using work equipment.</p> <p>Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.</p> <p>Retain records of the notes you have made in the steps outlined above.</p>	<p>If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record your arrangements as part of it.</p> <p>You can use our Church Health and Safety Policy template if you haven't done this and need one to comply with health and safety law.</p>

Want to know more?

We have produced some other useful resources to help you get started or simply check the adequacy of what you have already done. These are all available at:

www.methodistinsurance.co.uk/healthandsafety

Further guidance and resources are also available at:

www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/index.htm

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the enforcing authority for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Information in this document

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Need to contact us?

For further information on health and safety in churches:

Call our Risk Management Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

We may monitor or record calls to improve our service.

Email us at: riskadvice@micmail.co.uk



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