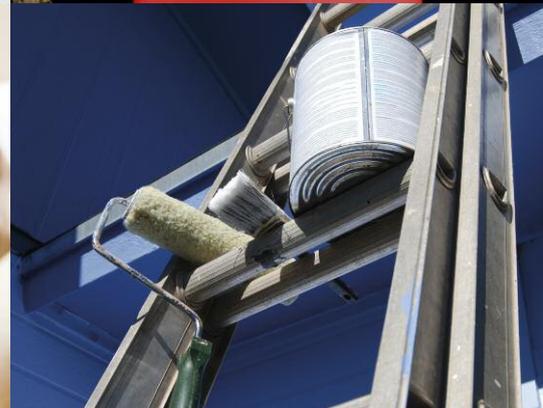
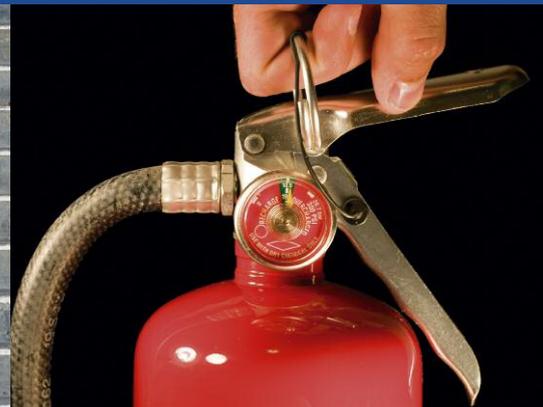


Health & Safety

in churches and other places of worship



“Health and safety is simply just a matter of commonsense.”

I have lost count of the number of times I have heard that declaration during my thirty years as an Environmental Health Officer employed full-time in occupational health and safety enforcement and advice work. If it were strictly true then there wouldn't have been the thousands of reportable accident reports that landed on my desk during that time.

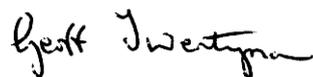
Commonsense does play a great part in avoiding accidents but there is need for forethought and, in some cases, technical knowledge. This is where risk assessments come in.

Churches are not such potentially dangerous places as, say, building sites but the premises can host such a variety of activities and age groups that they far outstretch those in an average business activity.

The duty to carry out a health and safety risk assessment in churches has been with us for quite a while but it can still seem a daunting task to many people. However, it really is quite simple. You are probably doing most of it already without realising it.

The information in this booklet, including the specimen health & safety policy and the risk assessment check and action list serve to assist you in the task.

Remember that although it is not a legal requirement, in most cases, for a church to have a written risk assessment it is certainly advantageous in these days of rising insurance claims and civil actions. Risk assessments serve not only as a framework to prompt you to keep your church as safe as possible, a good written document - coupled with putting the necessary actions into operation - can help you to prove that you have taken reasonable steps to eliminate or reduce risks to a minimum.



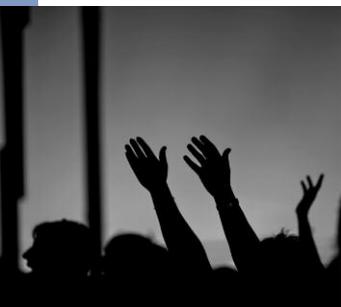
Geoff Twentyman
Environmental Health Officer (retired) and
Church/Circuit Property Secretary

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Introduction

Why Health and Safety in Churches and places of worship?



The risks to which persons may be exposed may be increased because of large congregation sizes or activities specifically involving groups, such as young persons or the elderly.

Today there is mounting pressure to provide for people's safety. Health and safety is not just for shops and offices, but churches and places of worship too.

Health and safety is simply about preventing harm to people. It is your place of worship and your responsibility, and you could be responsible when things go wrong.

As with any building, Churches and other places of worship (including associated grounds and halls) can expose employees, voluntary workers, users and other visitors to potential safety and health hazards if the premises are poorly maintained and managed.

In addition the risks to which persons may be exposed may be increased because of large congregation sizes or activities specifically involving groups, such as young persons or the elderly.

This book has been produced for people who have control of Churches and places

of worship. It describes the main types of risks associated with places of worship and the precautions that may be appropriate to safeguard those who may be at risk.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires you to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of yourself and others who may be affected by what you do or fail to do.

Certain specific areas are covered by subsequent Regulations, such as:

- Management of Health and Safety at Work.
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment.
- Manual Handling Operations.
- Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare).
- Personal Protective Equipment.
- Display Screen Equipment.
- Construction (Design and Management).

Hazards – the causes of accidents?

There are many different things which cause accidents and these are known as **hazards**.

Some common ones are:

- Worn or unstable steps.
- Stored equipment.
- Damaged carpets and loose rugs.
- Uneven flooring.
- Insufficiently lit pathways.
- Wet floors.
- Hot surfaces and heating systems.
- Faulty electrical wiring and equipment.
- Chemicals (including cleaning fluids).
- Maintenance equipment - lawnmower, ladders, hedge trimmers.
- Balconies without safety rails.
- Trailing electrical leads.
- Poorly maintained car parks, paths and paved areas.
- Unsuitable glass at low levels.
- Faulty chairs.
- Serving hot drinks when children are present.

There are also a number of things that could cause a fire in your Church or Place of Worship, including:

- Heating systems.
- Electrical wiring.
- Cooking equipment.
- Arson.

All churches need to carry out a Risk Assessment. You will need to look closely at what could cause an accident or a fire in your building and decide if you are doing all you can to prevent harm to people.

We also suggest that you carry out a Risk Assessment on any manse or residential property that is under your control.

The **Risk** is the chance that someone might be harmed by the hazard.



We suggest that you carry out a Risk Assessment on any manse or residential property that is under your control.

Slips, trips and falls



Many accidents occur outside in the church grounds, so it is important you identify the hazards and assess the risks both inside and out.

Over half of the accident claims we receive are when someone has had a slip, trip or fall on church premises. Whilst the majority are relatively minor, some cause life changing injuries and many of these could have been avoided.

Many of the accidents are outside in the church grounds, so it is important you identify the hazards and assess the risks both inside and out.

A hole in a path is a hazard and this becomes a risk when people walk down the path. You then need to decide what is the likelihood of them falling and if they do what is the severity of the injury likely to be.

Do you know where the church land ends and where a neighbouring property or local authority highway / footpath begins? It is wise to check the church deeds to ensure you know what you are responsible for.

Here are some common causes of accidents and these hazards may be present at your church:

- Floors, stairs and aisles that are slippery, cluttered or obstructed.
- Worn treads on stairs and steps.
- Loose floorboards.
- Uneven paving flags and deteriorated tarmac paths.
- Damaged, raised or loose grates, grids and manhole covers.
- Moss, lichen and bird guano on paths.
- Inadequate lighting – including faulty bulbs.

- Badly fitting or worn carpets, rugs and doormats.
- Absence of handrails or banisters.
- Overgrown grass.
- Low protruding walls.

Don't forget that the changing seasons can make a big difference to the risks:

- Broken or leaking down pipes can allow water to run across paths and freeze.
- Grass can become wet and muddy.
- Winter hazards of snow and ice.
- Fallen leaves in autumn can create a slippery surface.
- Rain water dripping from shoes and clothes can cause puddles on floors.
- Outside lights need to be working and switched on earlier in winter.

If you discover repairs are necessary, then repair the worst and most hazardous first by setting a schedule – prioritise your repairs if necessary. If a full path needs replacing and funds need to be raised, then carry out emergency temporary repairs to patch the worst areas and develop a plan to replace the path as soon as possible.

Priorities should be based on the **likelihood** of an accident occurring and the likely **severity** of the potential injury.

Manual handling

Many things that we do in our places of worship are done without thought. However lifting or carrying something can cause all sorts of problems including back pain. These injuries may be built up over a period of time and are not necessarily instant like a burn.

Many injuries in UK workplaces are because of poor lifting and carrying techniques, so this is a major problem. You need to identify the things that need to be moved, lifted or carried from one place to another. This would normally take the form of a Risk Assessment which should include looking at all potential hazards, from the size and shape of the object through to poor flooring or lighting and the amount of times that something needs to be lifted, carried or otherwise manually handled.

As part of this Risk Assessment, you need to ask yourself if something actually needs to be moved in the first place. It might be possible to use an alternative.

Factors that contribute to the risks are:

- The weight of the object. The heavier the object, the more chance there is of injury.
- The shape of the object. Larger, bulky or oddly shaped objects are far more difficult to lift and carry than square boxes.
- The height of the object. There is more chance of someone straining themselves if they have to stretch up to lift an object.
- The age of the person. Specifically at risk are the elderly and children.
- The state of the floor and the lighting.

It might be possible to use some kind of mechanical lifting aid for some items. This could be a trolley for carrying tables, chairs and boxes or a wheeled box to move music books and folders from one room to another.

Think carefully before moving the object, especially if it is bulky or heavy. Ask yourself questions like:

- Where does it need to go?
- How do you get there?
- What is the object like to carry (size, weight etc...)?

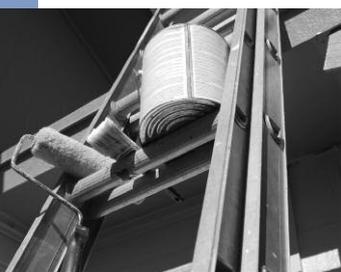
When lifting something, follow some basic rules:

- Don't stretch up too high or twist too much.
- Bend your knees if you are bending down (rather than stooping down and bending the back) and don't make any rapid movements.
- Don't carry too much at once - it is better to carry many small amounts than one large one (or ask someone to help you).
- Make sure that you can see the floor you are walking on so that you don't trip over.
- Get a firm grip of the object that you are carrying, hold with both hands.
- If the object has sharp edges or other hazards, wear suitable gloves or other Personal Protective Equipment.
- Get close to the object, keeping the shoulders at the same level and in the same direction as the hips.
- If you feel pain, stop immediately and take a break.



It might be possible to use some kind of mechanical lifting aid for some items. This could be a trolley for carrying tables, chairs and boxes or a wheeled box to move music books and folders from one room to another.

Working at height



One common cause of serious injury is working at height and the misuse of ladders.

It is essential that any work carried out at your church is done without putting anyone at personal risk.

One common cause of serious injury is working at height and the misuse of ladders. The following pointers have been included to highlight the potential dangers and the steps to take should you carry out any work on your church, which involves using a ladder.

Falls from ladders are more common than one might think and this is a subject worthy of deliberation in any discussion on safety around your church. We have dealt with a number of incidents where church voluntary workers have fallen when working at height, suffering serious and life changing injuries.

Many more suffer less serious injuries that result in time off work. These accidents are often due to the misuse of a ladder.

While one might not reasonably expect church members to put themselves at risk in situations which might be better in the hands of professionals, economic pressures mean that many churches have sadly accepted such practices as unavoidable.

New **Work at Height Regulations** came into force in April 2005, which stipulate that an employer shall ensure that a ladder is not used at a place of work unless a risk assessment indicates the

use of more suitable equipment is not justified due to the short duration / light nature of the work being undertaken. It is good practice to follow this advice with voluntary workers and not just employees.

Accidents will always happen, we must however take steps to minimise risks and to prevent people from putting themselves into potentially dangerous situations.

Your own assessment and acknowledgement of the risks is important and will enable you to take precautions to prevent accidents. Though it may be tempting to take the odd chance in carrying out jobs around your church, many accidents occur through over-confidence or complacency in using ladders.

Beware of:

- Misjudging your step from the ladder's lower rungs.
- Ladders slipping outwards at the bottom or sideways on slopes.
- Ladders moving because of unsuitable ground conditions.
- Ladders failing through old age and deterioration.
- Adverse weather conditions.
- The risk of falling tools.
- Using ladders when alone in the premises.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have a section of their website dedicated to falls from height, together with a number of useful publications.

www.hse.gov.uk or follow the links from the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Kitchen safety

Apart from the obvious fire risk, the kitchen can be one of the most dangerous rooms in a church. It contains hazards which can cause burns, scalds, poisoning, slipping, tripping and many other accidents.

Particular care needs to be taken when children are in the church, although best practice would be that they are not permitted in the kitchen area. There are many cases of young children being injured by hot drinks and great care is needed.

- Dispense hot drinks at a separate point from children's cold drinks and snacks and ensure hot beverages are out of children's reach.
- Be careful with hot liquids especially when carrying.
- Ensure pan handles do not protrude over the edge of the cooker.
- Take care when providing hot drinks to visitors.

- Spillages should be properly and promptly cleaned up.
- Warning signs should be displayed or areas closed where floors are slippery or wet.
- Store all detergents, cleaning materials and other chemicals out of reach of children or in a locked cupboard.
- Ensure wiring and electrical equipment is regularly checked and in good order.
- All containers should be clearly labelled and have instructions for correct use.
- Kitchens should contain a first aid kit and appropriate fire fighting equipment as identified in your Fire Risk Assessment.
- Portable water heaters are very hazardous - replace these with fixed units



Particular care needs to be taken when children are in the church, although best practice would be that they are not permitted in the kitchen area.

Preparing food and drink

You should also be aware of legislation affecting the preparation and sale of food and drink on church premises.

Provided that certain basic precautions are followed there is no reason whatsoever why churches should not be involved in the preparation and sale of food – whether a one off annual event, a weekly coffee morning or daily catering on a larger scale.

You need to be aware of legislation including The Food Safety Act 1990 and the The Food Hygiene Regulations 2006.

One interesting point that is not always known is that if you provide food for five or more days in any five consecutive weeks (as you would with a weekly coffee morning) then you must advise the local authority and you may have to be registered. You should contact your Local Authority Environmental Health Officer to check whether you need to register.



If you provide food for five or more days in any five consecutive weeks (as you would with a weekly coffee morning) then you must advise the local authority.

Further guidance on the preparation and sale of food can be obtained from your Local Authority Environmental Health Department and the Food Standards Agency.

www.food.gov.uk/catering or follow the links from the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Fire safety



The Government guides have been written so that the competent person with limited formal training and experience or knowledge should be able to carry out a fire risk assessment in a place of assembly.

This is some brief information on the new fire regulations which involve having to carry out a Fire Risk Assessment. This is not a full guide on the subject.

The **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** came into force in England and Wales on 1st October 2006 and it demonstrates the Government's commitment to reducing death, bodily injury and damage caused by fire. In Scotland the **Fire (Scotland) Act 2005** came into effect on the same date.

The Order applies to non-domestic premises and therefore applies to all businesses, places of worship and the voluntary sector. The Government has issued a range of detailed guidance notes on the reforms - **guides 6 and 7 are those applying to places of assembly and guide 9 covers outdoor events.** The Methodist Church has also produced both a detailed guide and a short introduction to help you.

The local managing trustees are regarded as the **Responsible Person** because they have control of the building. It is up to them to implement the Order and they must appoint one or more **Competent Persons**, depending on the size of the premises, to carry out the preventive and protective measures. Of

course the trustees can nominate themselves for this purpose.

The Government guides have been written so that the competent person with limited formal training and experience or knowledge should be able to carry out a fire risk assessment in a place of assembly.

If it is felt that a suitable competent person is not available in the church, then someone else from the circuit or someone external can be appointed. The Order does not require that a qualified person has to carry out the assessment.

Although the guidance notes are very detailed they are designed to be used by lay people. The introduction to the guidance says that it is not prescriptive and that there is no obligation to adopt any particular solution in the guide if fire safety can be met in some other way.

Churches do not have to have fire alarm systems, fire exit signs, emergency lighting or outward opening doors if the risk assessment shows that these are not necessary. However, arrangements must be in place to ensure that a fire can be detected and that persons can evacuate the buildings safely.

The Government guides can be accessed through the website www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/

The Methodist Church guidance is available on the website www.methodist.org.uk

Alternatively they can both be accessed easily through the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Asbestos

Asbestos can be a very dangerous substance and its control and management is therefore very important. The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 is the legislation you need to be aware of.

Regulation 4 introduced a new ‘duty to manage’ asbestos. The person on whom this duty is placed, the ‘duty holder’, is the person in control of maintenance activities in the premises – and therefore this would fall on the local managing trustees.

There are three main types of asbestos still found in premises. These are commonly called ‘blue asbestos’ (crocidolite), ‘brown asbestos’ (amosite) and ‘white asbestos’ (chrysolite). All of these are hazardous, although blue and brown asbestos are more hazardous than white. It is impossible to identify the different types accurately by sight.

Asbestos and asbestos based products have been used as fire breaks in ceiling voids, fire protection around structural steelwork, thermal insulation for pipes and boilers, wall and ceiling panels, partitions, roofing and wall cladding, gutters, rainwater pipes and water tanks, textured coatings and vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles.

Duty holders under the Regulations must:

- Carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment to establish if there is asbestos in the premises, its quantity and what condition it is in.
- Make and keep an up to date record of the location and condition of asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) or presumed ACMs in the premises.

- Assess the risk of the likelihood of anyone being exposed to fibres from these materials.
- Prepare a plan that sets out in detail how to manage the risk from this material. The measures to be specified in the plan for managing the risk must include monitoring the condition of any asbestos and ensuring that any asbestos is properly maintained or, where necessary, safely removed.
- Take the necessary steps to put the plan into action.
- Review and monitor the plan and the arrangements made to put it in place.
- Provide information on the location and condition of the material to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb it, and making it available to the emergency services.

A suitably trained person should be employed to undertake a survey of the premises to identify ACMs. The survey should be carried out in accordance with the HSE Guidance MDHS 100 Surveying, Sampling and Assessment of Asbestos-containing Materials.

You should ensure that the person undertaking the survey has the appropriate liability insurance by obtaining sight of the policy or other evidence. The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) strongly recommend the use of accredited / certificated surveyors for surveys.

You can check if an organisation is likely to be suitably qualified to undertake survey work by checking if they are accredited to ISO17020 (general criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection for asbestos surveys).



A suitably trained person should be employed to undertake a survey of the premises to identify Asbestos Containing Materials.

Further information is available from HSE Books

Telephone 01787 881165

www.hsebooks.co.uk or follow the links from the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Construction (Design and Management) 2007



Construction work undertaken by volunteers falls within the regulations and managing trustees are responsible for ensuring that all volunteers have sufficient training and competence.

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM) were first introduced in 1994 but were revised in April 2007 and are known as CDM 2007.

Some of the main points of CDM 2007 you will need to be aware of are:

- They are very similar to the 1994 CDM Regulations.

- The only construction work excluded is 'domestic work'. No construction work handled by managing trustees can be defined as 'domestic work'.

- All construction work must have a package of health & safety (H&S) information.

- Construction work undertaken by volunteers falls within the regulations and managing trustees are responsible for ensuring that all volunteers have sufficient training and competence.

- Managing trustees are responsible for checking the competence and responsibilities of designers and contractors.

- All construction work lasting more than 30 working days or involving more than 500 person days, must be notified to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

- A CDM Coordinator must be appointed for all notifiable projects – this person replaces the 1994 CDM Regulations 'planning supervisor' and has very similar duties.

The CDM Coordinator has duties including:

- Providing the managing trustees with advice relating to H&S risk management.

- Ensuring that all designers and contractors are competent.

- Coordinating H&S information.

- Notifying HSE where applicable.

- Preparation of the H&S file.

The CDM Coordinator should be appointed as early as possible in the project. Until a person has been appointed, the managing trustees are legally the CDM Coordinator.

All construction professionals should be familiar with the CDM regulations, and we recommend that you consult a suitable professional for advice whenever you are contemplating a building project.

The HSE has stressed that one of the main objectives of the revised regulations is that it is important to minimise paperwork and bureaucracy. One of the main complaints about the 1994 CDM regulations was that they produced a 'paperchase', including lengthy H&S documents, which were sometimes of little use.

Managing trustees who appoint anyone who they have not assessed to be competent is in breach of the regulations and therefore we recommend that a suitable professional is appointed to offer some advice. However, the formal appointment of a CDM Coordinator is only required for projects that have to be notified to the HSE.

If managing trustees do not need to appoint a CDM Coordinator and do not appoint a suitable professional to advise them as a 'competent person' then the managing trustees themselves become the competent person, which may be inadvisable.

Construction work is very widely defined and includes repair and redecoration, site investigation and preparation, demolition and work to services.

Further details and definitions can be found in the HSE publication *Managing Health & Safety in Construction: Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2007- Approved Code of Practice (L144)*, HSE Books 2007.

**Further information is available from HSE Books
Telephone 01787 881165.**

www.hsebooks.co.uk or follow the links from the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Accident reporting

You need an accident book, which must have a detachable section to ensure a person's details remain private to comply with the Data Protection Act.

Please refer to the HSE Accident Book which is available from HSE Books, Churches Purchasing Scheme and other suppliers.

Follow the links from the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

RIDDOR - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences.

These regulations apply to employers, the self employed and anyone in control of work premises. The Health and Safety Executive have advised that they consider churches and places of worship to fall under the regulations.

You must report:

- Any fatal injury, major injury, over 3 day injury or disease to any employee or self employed person.
- Any incident where a member of the public is killed or taken directly to hospital.
- Any dangerous occurrence, even if there are no reportable injuries.

If you are unsure whether you need to report an incident then you should contact the Incident Contact Centre on 0845 300 9923.

Please refer to the HSE publication Riddor Explained and the website www.riddor.gov.uk or follow the links from the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Incidents and potential claims should also be reported to us. Contact our Claims Team on 0845 60 61 331.

It is important you collate and retain all information and evidence, in case a claim is made against you.

First Aid Box

What should a first aid box contain?

There is no mandatory list of contents for first aid boxes. Deciding what to include should be based on your assessment of first aid needs. A suggested list of contents, where there is no special risk in the workplace, is given in the free HSE leaflet "First aid at work: your questions answered". Equivalent but different items will be considered acceptable. Any items in the first aid box that have passed their expiry date should be disposed of safely.

In general, tablets and medication should not be kept in the first aid box.

How often should the contents of first aid boxes be replaced?

Although there is no specific review timetable, many items, particularly sterile ones, are marked with 'best before dates'. Such items should be replaced by the dates given. In cases where sterile items have no dates, it would be advisable to check with the manufacturers to find out how long they can be kept for. For non-sterile items without dates, it is a matter of judgement, based on whether they are fit for purpose.



It is important you collate and retain all information and evidence, in case a claim is made against you.

Health and Safety Policy

Sample policy to assist you with creating your own:

In concern for the well-being of everyone,

_____ **Church**

will take all steps in its power to:

- ensure internally and externally the buildings, plant and equipment are in a safe condition.
- keep all equipment stored safely.
- provide opportunities for training for all leaders in avoiding hazards.
- act responsibly towards all employees and ensure their safety and that of visitors, contractors and members of the general public.

The committee responsible for overseeing these matters is:

The nearest enforcing authority is:

(Your Local Authority will know which this is)

Date: _____

(Date for review and checking on recent advice and legislation)

More information on the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 with regard to churches can be found at: **www.hse.gov.uk**

Other Health and Safety advice can be found at **www.britishsafetycouncil.co.uk**

Sample Health and Safety policy statement

It is proposed that we adopt the following as our church policy statement.

We will comply with current Health and Safety legislation by:

- Conducting an annual Health and Safety risk assessment of all properties owned either by the circuit or by individual churches, in conjunction with all church stewards, to ensure that all and any defects or shortcomings are properly considered and repairs or improvements implemented.
- Ensuring that all churches devise, maintain and regularly test emergency evacuation procedures.
- Entering into a service contract to ensure that all gas and electrical installations and appliances are examined and maintained on an annual basis or other such period that is considered desirable or required by law.
- Complying with food hygiene regulations.
- Ensuring that all cleaning liquids, aerosols, polishes and pesticides are securely locked away when not in use.
- Complying fully with The Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy.
- Maintaining a suitable first aid kit and a formal accident book and displaying prominent notices indicating where these may be found.

How to assess the risks in your Church or Place of Worship

- Step 1** Look for the hazards.
- Step 2** Decide who might be harmed and how.
- Step 3** Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
- Step 4** Record your findings.
- Step 5** Review your assessment and revise it if necessary.

Who should carry out the assessment?

This can be any person appointed by the Church Council to undertake the task. You do not have to pay a professional, although ideally it may be someone with previous experience of Risk Assessment. In some Churches and Circuits, committees are formed who are responsible for Health and Safety issues.

Remember you all know your own buildings extremely well and may not notice a hazard. It is therefore a good idea to swap Health and Safety Officers with that of a neighbouring church to double check your assessment. A fresh set of eyes will see the hazards that could be faced by any church member, visitor or trespasser!

Step 1 - Look for the hazards

When carrying out a Risk Assessment, walk around your church and look objectively at what might reasonably be expected to cause harm – the hazards. Ignore the trivial and concentrate on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people in your church.

There will be many things to consider and the following examples will act as a guide:

- Slipping and tripping hazards – a poorly maintained floor or stairs.

- Storage of chemicals.

- The moving parts of machinery – lawnmower or hedge trimmer blades.

- Ladders and scaffold towers.

- Vehicles.

- Electricity - poor or old wiring.

- Manual handling techniques.

- Noise.

- Poor lighting.

- Low temperature.

Divide building and grounds into easily identifiable locations – such as paths, car parks, vestry, church, hall, boiler room, etc.

Ask members and users at your church to keep you informed if they notice things which they think could cause harm.

You must also consider the hazards for non-visitors and trespassers – such as people who take short cuts through your car park and grounds.



When carrying out a Risk Assessment, walk around your church and look objectively at what might reasonably be expected to cause harm – the hazards.

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

There is no need to list individuals by name - just think about groups of people doing similar work or who may be affected. These may include:

- Church members.

- Maintenance personnel / contractors.

- Voluntary workers.

- Visitors / outside users visiting your church.

- Cleaners.

- Members of the public.

Pay particular attention to vulnerable groups of people who may be affected by different hazards:

- People with disabilities.

- New visitors who do not know the layout.

- Inexperienced staff.

- Lone workers.

- Children.

- Elderly.

Step 3 - Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done

Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm in order to determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains.

What you must decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low. First of all, establish whether or not you are aware of all the things the law says you must do and then act accordingly. For example, there are specific legal requirements on working at heights.

Consider whether generally accepted standards are in place. But don't stop there, because the law also says that you **MUST DO** what is reasonably practicable to keep your church safe.

Your real aim is to minimise all risks by adding to your precautions as necessary. If you find that something needs to be done, draw up an 'action list' and give priority to any remaining risks which are high and/or those which could affect most people.

In taking action ask:

1. Can we remove the hazard altogether?

This might require an alternative method to be used or something might need to be designed. For example, a dangerous piece of equipment such as an open bar electric fire might need to be removed.

2. Can we substitute the hazard?

Replace the hazard with something that is less hazardous. For example, replace a caustic cleaner with a non-caustic one.

3. Can we remove the hazard from the person?

Remove the hazard from the person. For example, keep cleaning materials in a locked cupboard.

4. Can we improve procedures?

Design into working practices safe ways to do a task and reduce exposure to

hazards. For example, instructing someone on how to use equipment safely – such as strimmers and ladders.

5. Can we use warning signs?

Display instructions or posters. For example, warning of uneven floor surfaces.

6. Can we use protective equipment?

If you are unable to eradicate the risk using any of the above procedures, then use protective equipment as a last resort.

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents, or putting non-slip material on slippery steps, are inexpensive precautions. Failure to take simple precautions can cost much more if an accident should occur.

The first port of call in improving health and safety is to reduce the risks. Many of the things which must be done are simple and common sense.

Take the following examples:

- Store equipment in a safe way - do not stack boxes on top of other boxes or on cupboards.

- Carry goods carefully, bending your knees not your back. Do not carry too much at a time. Instruct and train people how to do this.

- Do not trail cables along gangways and aisles. Do not use multi-plug adaptors.

- Lock away all chemicals, including cleaning fluids, when they are not needed.

- Provide disposable gloves for people who clean your building. Paper towels are a hygienic way of drying hands.

- Keep books and papers away from equipment such as heaters and boilers which could get hot.

- Place candles in flame proof holders and do not leave them unattended. Do not place tea-lights on surfaces - always use a suitable holder.

- Keep fire exits and corridors clear and do not chain fire exit doors shut. Do not prop open fire safety doors.

- Check chairs to ensure they are in a safe condition and not showing signs of damage.

- When cleaning floors do so at an appropriate time - NOT just before a service / event starts as floors may be left wet and slippery.

Step 4 - Record your findings

It is most important to keep a written record of what has been done; recording the significant findings of your assessment. This means writing down the significant hazards and conclusions.

In the event of a claim following an accident, written documentation is vitally important. Good documented risk assessments can be crucial contemporaneous evidence in defending a claim, where it may be one person's word against another's.

Examples of findings are;

'Electrical installations: insulation and earth checked and judged sound.'

'Pathways: uneven path judged to be a hazard and risk to all users. Urgent repairs required.'

Suitable and sufficient - not perfect!

Risk assessments must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that a proper check has been made, all the obvious significant hazards have been considered, precautions are reasonable and the remaining risk is low.

Keep the written record for future reference - it can help you if an inspector asks what precautions you have taken, or if you become involved in any action for civil liability.

It can also remind everyone involved in the running of your church to be vigilant on particular hazards and precautions and demonstrate compliance with legal requirements.

To make things simpler you can refer to other documents, such as manuals, the arrangements in your health and safety policy statement, manufacturers' instructions, your health and safety procedures and your arrangements for general fire safety.

These may already list hazards and precautions. It is unnecessary to duplicate this and it is up to you whether you combine all the documents, or keep them separately.

Step 5 - Review your assessment and revise it if necessary

Set a date for review of the assessment. We would suggest it is reviewed at least once every year.

If there are any significant changes in your church, add to the assessment if it is necessary to take account of a new hazard. There is however, no need to amend your assessment for every trivial change.

Consider hazards and do what is necessary to minimise the risks. It is good practice to review your assessment from time to time to ensure precautions are working effectively.

Should there ever be an accident then a new Risk Assessment should be carried out covering the circumstances.

We would recommend that every Church Council meeting should include an item on the agenda for Health & Safety - even if there is nothing to report you will have a minuted record that the issue has been raised.

Risk assessment check and action list

Church: _____

Carried out by: _____ Date: _____

The risk assessment should be regarded as a careful examination as to what in the church premises could cause harm to people, the hazards, so that the managing trustees can decide whether they have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

It has to be remembered that even after all precautions have been taken, some risk will remain. Therefore what has to be decided in each case is whether what has been done or will be done will, as far as reasonably practicable, make the church premises safe for those who use them.

The questions in the check list draw attention to what could be described as usual hazards found on church premises. The person conducting the risk

assessment needs to go round the church premises asking the questions and making an assessment as to whether any action is required and how urgent it is having regard to the risk of injury.

There will probably be other hazards specific to your church, so this example risk assessment form has space at the end for these to be recorded.

Please feel free to photocopy these pages for your risk assessment or download a copy from the Resource Centre section on our website www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
<p>1 Are the internal church premises including staircases, floors and toilets in a safe and clean condition?</p> <p>Are they adequately lit?</p> <p>Are there satisfactory arrangements for their ongoing cleaning and maintenance?</p>		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
1 (continued)		
2 Are the external church premises including car parks, paths and gardens in a safe and clean condition? Are they adequately lit? Are there satisfactory arrangements for their ongoing cleaning and maintenance?		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
<p>3 Is the electrical wiring safe and regularly tested by a qualified electrician?</p>		
<p>4 Are all portable electrical appliances regularly checked for safety - for example faulty flexes, appropriate fuses, trailing wires?</p> <p>Are they plugged into a sufficient number of sockets for their use without the use of adaptors?</p> <p>Are there clear rules as to what electrical equipment can be brought on to the church premises for use by any outside organisation?</p> <p>Have you carried out an annual visual inspection of the appliances?</p>		
<p>5 Is the gas / oil installation in good working order?</p> <p>Is it regularly tested by a qualified engineer and is there a regular maintenance contract?</p>		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
6 Are emergency exits and routes provided with emergency lighting?		
7 Are all exits and escape routes clearly marked with appropriate signs which comply with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996? Are exit and escape routes, staircases and passages which would be used in case of emergency kept clear of obstruction and properly lit?		
8 Are all exit doors to be used in case of emergency either unlocked or fitted with panic bolts? Where practical or possible do they open outwards?		
9 Has a specific Fire Risk Assessment been carried out?		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
10 Are there clear instructions displayed or issued giving instructions as to what to do in the event of a fire?		
11 Are there appropriate arrangements for giving warning in case of fire?		
12 Is the fire fighting equipment adequate, easy to use, properly positioned and signed in accordance with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996, and is it regularly maintained?		
13 Is it appropriate to specify the maximum number of people that may be present at any one time in any part of the premises?		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
<p>14 Are there any special contacts necessary with the external emergency services as regards to rescue work and fire fighting?</p>		
<p>15 Does the kitchen and any equipment in it comply with modern hygiene requirements? If necessary has the local authority been advised about the food preparation?</p>		
<p>16 If furniture, or other heavy items need to be moved, is proper advice given on how this should be done and in particular how furniture and equipment should be stacked or stored? Has a Manual Handling Risk Assessment been carried out?</p>		
<p>17 Is a first aid box available? Is someone responsible for ensuring that it is kept complete? Are any people designated as first aiders?</p>		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
<p>18 Where a VDU / computer screen is used on a daily basis, has the appropriate check and advice been given? Refer to the HSE VDU workstation checklist.</p>		
<p>19 If any hazardous or harmful substances, such as bleach, are used or stored on the church premises are there proper precautions for their use, labelling and storage? Refer to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)</p>		
<p>20 Are all items of machinery and equipment for use on the church premises, such as ladders and lawnmowers, in a safe condition and regularly inspected? Have Work at Height Risk Assessments been carried out?</p>		
<p>21 Are appropriate arrangements made for planning and supervising any volunteer work parties undertaking maintenance or repairs on the church premises? Have you checked the competency of volunteers who undertake work?</p>		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
<p>22 Are there arrangements for any employees, volunteers, leaders or helpers to be consulted or supplied with appropriate information about Health and Safety and Fire Precautions?</p>		
<p>23 Are there arrangements for outside contractors who carry out work on the church premises to ensure that they work safely and do not create a safety hazard for others?</p>		
<p>24 Where outside organisations use the church premises are the users aware of the church's Health and Safety Policy and fire evacuation procedures? Is it clear to them that they must take responsibility for their own operations? Are checks made to ensure groups regularly using the premises (more than three times per year) have adequate public and employer's liability insurance?</p>		
<p>25 Do any swing doors have visibility panels and if so are these fitted with safety glass? Are there any other glazed areas (doors, windows, partitions etc.) in critical locations that should be fitted with safety glass?</p>		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action
26 Is there a procedure for investigating, recording and reporting of accidents?		
27 Is there a written 'safeguarding' procedure in place, in accordance with Methodist Church Standing Orders? Are procedures in place for vetting people working with children, young people and vulnerable adults?		
28 Has a specific Asbestos Risk Assessment been carried out?		
29 Is there a written Health and Safety Policy?		
30 Are there procedures for monitoring the action required as a result of this risk assessment and for its review?		

Nature of check	Result of check and note of action	Programme for action

Programme for action					
Result of check and note of action					
Nature of check					

Further information and help available to you

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has produced a comprehensive list of books which can be purchased from HSE Bookshops by mail-order or on-line.

HSE Books

PO Box 1999

Sudbury

Suffolk

CO10 2WA

Tel: 01787 881165

Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk

If you are interested in arranging a presentation on risk assessments and health and safety to your Circuit Meeting or District, then please contact us on 0345 60 61 331 or email enquiries@micmail.com

You may also like to speak to one of our Insurance Consultants and Surveyors during their visit to your church. They are available to discuss a wide range of issues on health and safety matters.

One organisation that has specialised in covering Health and Safety for Places of Worship is **Church Safety**, whose website address is www.churchsafety.org.uk

For more advice on fire safety equipment please contact:

British Approval for Fire Equipment,

48a Eden Street,

Kingston upon Thames,

Surrey KT1 1EE.

We have a selection of publications available on specific topics including bouncy castles, firework displays & bonfires and Advent and Christmas.

Further information and guidance can be found on our website which is regularly updated. It includes a section called Resource Centre with links to many useful websites and downloads of useful leaflets and guidance notes.

www.methodistinsurance.co.uk



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