

# Health and Safety in Churches and Places of Worship



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## Introduction

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Environmental Health Department is responsible for the enforcement of health and safety in premises, within the district, where church worship or religious meetings and associated social events are held.

This booklet aims to highlight the kinds of things which cause the more common accidents and harm to people's health in places of worship. The booklet also provides simple advice and some working templates to assist putting the advice into practice.

Implementing measures to ensure compliance doesn't have to be expensive, time consuming or complicated, in fact, safer and more efficient working practices can often save money but more importantly they can help to save lives.

The information in the document is presented so as to encourage you to re-use in any format or medium.

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For further information please contact:

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  
 Health and Wellbeing Department  
 Tel: 0300 013 2233  
 Email: [ehealth@nmandd.org](mailto:ehealth@nmandd.org)

A copy of this booklet is also available to download from [www.newrymournedown.org](http://www.newrymournedown.org)

# Why highlight the importance of health and safety in places of worship?

Health and safety is an increasingly important part of daily life in work and at home, as well as in churches and places of worship. It is misleading to believe that accidents will never happen in church or that health and safety only applies to larger or higher risk workplaces.

Every year a number of accidents occur in churches, halls and churchyards in connection with church activities. Not only does this cause suffering to those who are injured, it can often result in serious disruption to the smooth running of the church and its various activities. For example, if an organist, cleaner or a 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.

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 is the main piece of legislation which sets out requirements for health and safety policy and risk assessments, and also identifies how to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of persons.

## What is a Health and Safety Policy?

A health and safety policy sets out general approach and commitment together with the arrangements to have put in place for managing health and safety in your place of worship. It is a unique document that says who does what, when and how.

The policy is usually made up of three parts:-

- 1. A Statement of Intent (what you intend to do) - A written policy statement which shows a commitment to health and safety.**
- 2. Organisational Details (who will be involved) - This section names those who will have responsibilities for health and safety matters in your place of worship.**
- 3. Arrangements (how you will put it in place) - This section explains how you will control the main hazards that have been identified in your risk assessment.**

Your health and safety policy will only be effective if it is acted upon and followed by you and all persons involved in the different activities in the place of worship. It should be reviewed regularly, especially when activities change and as a minimum every three years.

### Do I need a health and safety policy?

No matter what size your place of worship is, you will need to have certain arrangements, procedures or rules in place to ensure the health and safety of all persons using your premises. It is good practice to record all of these details in a policy document. If you have five or more employees, you must write your policy down.

## Part 1 - Statement of Intent

This is the Health and Safety Policy Statement of

(place of worship)

### Our statement of general policy is:

- To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all members of the congregation, contractors, visitors and others who may visit the church, churchyard and any associated buildings
- To provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for all our employees, casual labourers and voluntary helpers
- To provide information, instruction, training and supervision for all our employees, casual labourers and voluntary helpers to ensure they are competent to perform their duties
- To prevent accidents and cases of work related ill health and provide adequate control of health and safety risks arising from work activities
- To regularly review and revise the policy, particularly in the light of any changes to our buildings or activities
- To include health and safety on the agenda for all committee/ vestry/ parochial meetings (where they exist)
- To implement emergency procedures – including evacuation in case of fire or other significant incident
- To ensure safe storage and use of substances
- To engage and consult with employees, casual labour and voluntary helpers on health and safety matters.

Signed: .....

Position: .....

Clergyman/ Rector/ Priest in Charge  
(Delete as appropriate)

Date: ..... Review Date: .....

## Part 2 - Organisational Details

1. Overall responsibility for health and safety is that of the Vicar/ Rector/ Priest in Charge/Minister to ensure arrangements are in place to comply with regulations and codes of practice.

(Insert Name)

Specific responsibilities may be designated to church personnel. As new projects emerge, the names of responsible persons will be notified and the list amended accordingly.

2. Responsibility to ensure that the arrangements outlined in this policy are carried out and updated as necessary lies with the Church Wardens/Committee, as noted below:

(Insert Name)

3. The Parochial Church Council / Select Vestry/Session have general responsibility to ensure that the health and safety policy is implemented.

(Insert Name)

4. The following person identified as the health and safety officer has responsibility for the daily implementation of the arrangements outlined in this policy:

(Insert Name)

The responsibilities of the Health and Safety officer are to:

- be familiar with Health and Safety Regulations relating to church premises
- be knowledgeable about the Health and Safety policy and ensure its arrangements are observed
- ensure adequate fire fighting equipment is available and maintained
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe systems of work are in place
- ensure that all plant, equipment and tools are in good condition and properly maintained and that all operators have received the appropriate training
- maintain adequate access and egress; and
- provide safety equipment and clothing for use by all personnel where required.

5. All employees and voluntary workers have a responsibility to co-operate in the implementation of this Health and Safety policy and to take reasonable care of themselves and others whilst on church business or premises and must therefore:-

- Comply with safety rules, operating instructions and working procedures
- Report all accidents (however minor), injuries, near misses or other potential safety hazards as soon as possible
- Report any fault or defect in equipment immediately to the appropriate person
- Not misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety; and
- Use protective clothing and equipment, as provided, when required.

6. The following persons are responsible for safety in particular areas:

*Allocate responsibilities either by area of the church or by activity or a combination of both.*

Area	Name / Position
Bell ringing chamber	
Boiler/ Plant room	
Choir vestries	
Clergy vestries	
Church yard	
Hall	
Kitchens	
Main body of church	
Organ loft	

Please note this list is not exhaustive, other areas should be added as appropriate.



Activity	Name / Position
Accident / Incident book & reporting	
Building defects	
Condition of churchyard	
Condition of floors and stairs	
Contractors	
Display screen equipment	
Fixed electrical installation	
Gas equipment	
Hazardous substances	
Health and safety training	
Light bulb changing	
Manual handling	
Plant and machinery	
Portable electrical appliances	
Work at high levels	

Please note this list is not exhaustive, other areas should be added as appropriate.

## Part 3 - Arrangements

This section sets out the practical arrangements that you will need to have in place for doing your risk assessments. This should consider the health and safety of congregation members, contractors, employees, visitors and volunteers.

### Accidents and First Aid

Location of First Aid boxes

Trained/Qualified First Aiders are:

The accident book is located at:

### Electrical Safety

A list of all portable electrical appliances will be maintained by:

(insert name of responsible person)

All plugs, cables and sockets will be regularly inspected by a responsible person to ensure that there are no loose connections, worn flexes or trailing leads.

(insert name of responsible person)

(insert frequency)

Any necessary repairs will be reported for action to:

(insert name of responsible person)

All our portable electrical equipment will be tested by a competent person

(insert name of responsible person)

(insert frequency)

The fixed electrical system will be inspected by a competent contractor who is a member of an appropriate association, such as National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), Electrical Contractors Association (ECA), or similar, and any remedial work carried out.

(insert frequency)

(insert contractor name)

The lighting conductor system (where necessary eg spires) will be examined and tested by a competent specialist

(insert name of responsible person)

All employees and volunteers must observe the undernoted:

- Do not attempt to use or repair faulty or damaged equipment
- Do not bring any electrical equipment on to the premises or use it until it has been tested by the approved person and entered in the electrical equipment record
- Position flexible cables so that they do not constitute a tripping hazard and are not subject to damage
- Report all faults immediately to the responsible person
- Switch off and disconnect electrical equipment when not in use for long periods
- Visually check all electrical equipment before use.

**Gas Safety**

Gas boilers and any other gas equipment will be maintained in a safe condition and checked annually by a competent person from the Gas Safe Register.

(insert name of responsible person)

**Hazardous Substances**

A list of all hazardous substances used in the church, hall and grounds will be maintained by a responsible person. Where possible, the use of hazardous substances will be eliminated. If this is not possible, data sheets or manufacturers’ product information will be used to determine the correct method of use, protective clothing required, storage method and action to take in the event of an accident.

(insert name of responsible person)

**Safety of Plant and Equipment**

A list of all items of plant and machinery will be maintained by a responsible person who will ensure the following checks are in place:

- After carrying out maintenance and adjustments, all guards must be replaced before the machinery is used
- All plant and machinery will be regularly maintained with a schedule of requirements
- Any defect or damage of any item of plant or machinery must be reported to the responsible person
- Before using any item of plant or machinery, a check must be made to ensure it is in a safe working condition, correctly adjusted and without defect
- Employees and volunteers must not operate plant or machinery that they are not trained or authorised to use
- Machinery must be switched off before any adjustments are made
- The appropriate personal protective equipment detailed below must be worn when operating any item of plant and machinery.

(insert name of responsible person)

List all your items of plant and machinery and the rules and procedures for their use, including the appropriate personal protective equipment needed. A copy may be inserted/ kept with this policy.

Plant/Machinery Item	Procedure for Use	Personal Protective Equipment Required

The following items of plant and equipment are tested by a competent person in accordance with an inspection programme.

Item	Inspection arrangements

List those items of plant and equipment that require inspection by a competent person such as an insurance representative Items may include passenger lift/ disabled access lift.

**Slips, trips and falls- Condition of floors, steps and paths**

A responsible person will conduct inspections at a suitable frequency of all floors and stairs in church buildings and all paths and steps in the churchyard having due regard to accumulation of leaves, moss and icy conditions. All defects or remedial works will be actioned.

(insert name of responsible person)

**Lighting**

A responsible person will ensure that all lights in the place of worship and external grounds are working and sufficient to ensure adequate lighting. Bulbs will be replaced following safe working precautions.

(insert name of responsible person)

**Working at Height**

A responsible person will identify areas in the interior and exterior of the church buildings which will require specific precautions and procedures.

The following areas are designated as high level working areas may include the altar, nave, parapets, guttering, roof, ceiling lights etc.

(insert areas)

Only the following persons may work at high level e.g. approved contractors, competent, named individuals.

(insert name(s))

The following procedures/precautions must be followed:

(insert details)

**Manual Handling- lifting, carrying and moving loads**

A responsible person will aim to eliminate the need for manual handling as far as is reasonably practicable. Where it is not possible to avoid the need to move loads, they will carry out risk assessments and make use of lifting aids, including trolleys, lifts and hoists as far as possible.

The necessary training will be given to all those employees and volunteers who are required to undertake manual handling. Only those persons who have received the appropriate training are authorised to undertake manual handling tasks.

(insert name of responsible person)

**Display Screen Equipment**

A responsible person will assess the risks to all habitual users of computer workstations and take action to reduce those risks to the lowest level possible. The following factors will be considered when carrying out risk assessments, where necessary :-

- Stability and legibility of the screen;
- Contrast and brightness of the screen;
- Tilt and swivel of the screen;
- Suitability of keyboards, desks and chairs; and
- The work station environment.

(insert name of responsible person)

**Asbestos**

A survey will be carried out by a competent person to identify any asbestos - containing material in church buildings. Large amounts of asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) were used for a wide range of construction purposes in new and refurbished buildings until 1999 when all use of asbestos was banned. This extensive use means that properties constructed pre-2000 should be presumed to contain ACMs (unless there is evidence to show otherwise).

An Asbestos Management Plan will be prepared to include:

- A survey carried out by a competent surveyor and a register of Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) compiled;
- Asbestos Action Plan – A documented plan of action to be taken on ACMs eg replace or encapsulate;
- Monitoring – Details of how ACMs are monitored e.g. visual inspection to check for damage to ACM's (should be carried out at least annually);
- Communication Plan – Information on how ACMs are communicated to relevant people eg stickers/signs, warning contractors.

(insert name of surveyor)

(insert name of person with copy of plan)

**Hazardous Buildings**

A responsible person will inspect all church buildings at a suitable frequency to ensure that any defects are noted and actioned. Where necessary, temporary measures will be taken to ensure there is no risk of accident or injury.

(insert name of responsible person)

## Legionella

A competent person who understands your water systems (showers, ornamental fountains etc.) will establish a description of your system and any possible exposure to legionella risk as part of a risk assessment. The following factors will be considered:-

- Any potential risk sources and controls in place;
- Monitoring, inspection and maintenance procedures; and
- Record of checks carried out.

(insert name of responsible person)

## Contractors

A responsible person must ensure that anyone entering church premises for the purposes of carrying out work, other than an employee or voluntary worker of the church, will be regarded as a contractor and must adhere to agreed guidelines.

(insert name of responsible person)

## Information

A copy of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) poster “Health and Safety Law- what you should know” is displayed in the place of worship.

(insert location)

Employers are required to provide their employees with certain basic information concerning their health, safety and welfare at work. You can comply with this duty by either displaying the approved poster or by providing employees with a copy of the leaflet. The poster and leaflet can be obtained from:

TSO Customer Services  
 Phone: 0870 600 5522  
 Fax: 0870 600 5533  
 Email: customer.services@tso.co.uk  
 Web: www.tsoshop.co.uk

# Risk Assessments

Risk assessments help protect the public coming into your place of worship as well as ensuring you work within the law.

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of all aspects of anything in your church building that could cause harm to people, so that you can decide whether you have taken enough precautions or if you should do more to prevent harm. The law does not expect you to remove all risk, but you must protect people as far as is reasonably possible.

### When thinking about your risk assessment, remember:

- a hazard can be anything that has the potential to cause harm;
- a risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody may be harmed by the hazard.

When you are carrying out your risk assessment, it may be helpful to divide your place of worship into different activities or areas and deal with each of these separately. This will be less daunting than trying to carry out a risk assessment for the whole church building and grounds.

### Follow the five steps to assessing risk.

**Step 1:** Identifying hazards and those at risk - what has the potential to cause injury or ill-health.

**Step 2:** Decide who might be harmed and how.

**Step 3:** Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions.

**Step 4:** Record your findings and implement them.

**Step 5:** Review your risk assessment and update if necessary.



## Place of Worship Risk Assessment

This is an example of a risk assessment and shows the kind of approach a church or a place of worship might take. Please note that it is not a generic risk assessment that you just adopt without any thought.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom?	Action by when	Done
Slips and trips	Public fall on slippery surfaces or spillages	Good housekeeping All areas well lit.	Better housekeeping in kitchen and at catering events. More bins. Salt available for icy weather.	Committee members	ASAP	
Electrical	Public from electric shock or burns from faulty equipment	Responsible person trained to perform regular checks on electrical appliances.	Electrical installation and portable appliances to be tested and maintained by competent person.	Responsible Person	3 months	
Work at height	Contractors or Volunteers	Provide suitable ladders	Designate high risk area working and limit persons to access. Clear procedures for work at heights. Inspection of ladders.	Responsible Person	1 month	
Fire and Explosion	Public	Insurance. Portable Appliance Testing.	Gas Safe competent person to maintain the gas system annually. Fire risk assessment to be completed.	Responsible Person	2 months	
Collapse of grave	Grave Digger working alone	Trained operatives. Clear procedures.	Provide additional protective clothing. Notification of onsite/offsite arrangements.	Responsible Person	ASAP	

## Place of Worship Risk Assessment

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom?	Action by when	Done

# Potential Hazards

## Churchyard Maintenance

Equipment used to maintain churchyards is usually more powerful than domestic equipment. All garden machinery should be inspected and serviced regularly and any defects remedied immediately. Appropriate safety equipment should be used where necessary. Training to use work equipment eg chainsaws, mowers, must be sufficient to ensure all relevant persons are competent in their use. Training depends on the task and to what extent an employee already has relevant knowledge and experience.

## Cleaning

Cleaning activities are carried out regularly in church premises and it is important to consider the risks to persons while cleaning and put adequate control measures in place. Cleaning will more than likely be carried out by members of the congregation and it is important that they are aware of any precautions that need to be taken when accessing areas for cleaning and using cleaning chemicals.

If the church employs specific staff or cleaning contractors to carry out the task of cleaning then adequate controls must also be implemented for their safety also.

- Look at precautions in place for preventing slips or trips when cleaning eg wet floor signage, prompt cleaning of spillages and non-slip footwear or flooring
- Look at what cleaning activities are carried out. Can any of the cleaning activities be done in a safer manner for example, by using extending cleaning equipment rather than getting up at a height to light fittings
- Hazardous cleaning chemicals should be replaced with less hazardous chemicals where possible. All chemicals should be kept in their original packaging and instructions for safe use adhered to
- If electrical equipment is used for cleaning such as vacuum cleaners and floor cleaners they must be maintained in a safe condition. Persons using such equipment should be advised on safe use and procedures for reporting defects
- If using cleaning equipment outside such as power washers it must be ensured that they are appropriate for outdoor use. Where electrical equipment is used in wet conditions, then the mains supply point should be protected by a waterproof cover
- Persons carrying out cleaning should be briefed on cleaning activities to be carried out and instruction on the safe use of cleaning equipment and chemicals.

## Contractors

Anyone entering your premises for the purpose of carrying out work, other than an employee or voluntary worker of the church/ parish, will be regarded as a contractor.

When engaging contractors, including the self-employed, the following should be considered:

- contractors must co-operate with church officials in providing a safe place of work and a safe system of operation
- request a copy of their health and safety policy (where required by law)
- request evidence that they have appropriate public and employers liability insurance in place. A record of this evidence should be maintained
- provide contractors with detailed instructions regarding the areas where they are permitted to work and the extent of the work they are authorised to undertake
- risks can be reduced by using contractors that you are familiar with and have established arrangements for health and safety. Risk is also reduced by having regular communication with contractors on site, your own employees and members of the public who need to be informed about any additional control measures they need to follow in order to stay safe when contractors are on site
- where plant and machinery is brought onto the church premises by contractors, they must be able to show where necessary that the equipment has been inspected and tested to ensure its safe operation.

## Electrical Safety

Electricity is a familiar and necessary part of everyday life, but electricity can kill or severely injure people and cause damage to property.

All electrical equipment, including portable equipment and installations, should be maintained, so far as is reasonably practicable, to prevent danger.

### Electrical Equipment

Electrical equipment should be visually checked at regular intervals to ensure that there are no loose connections, worn flexes or trailing leads and to spot early signs of damage or deterioration. Any repairs needed should be reported to the relevant person for action.

It is good practice to maintain a list of all portable electrical appliances.

It is recommended that portable electrical equipment is tested by a competent person with an appropriate level of electrical knowledge and experience who has the correct equipment to complete the tests, know how to use it and can correctly interpret the results. Any unsafe equipment should be removed from use and disposed of in a safe manner.

### Fixed Electrical Installation

It is recommended that the fixed electrical installation should be inspected at least once every five years or according to the recommendations of the competent person.

The electrical installation should be inspected by a person who has the competence to do so, such as an approved contractor from Electrical Contractors Association (ECA), National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), or other similar approved organisation.

### Outdoor Electrical Equipment

Outdoor electrical equipment should be suitable for its intended environment. Appropriate protective devices should be in place.

#### Tips to ensure Electrical Safety

- Adequate number of socket outlets should be provided as overloading socket outlets by using adaptors can cause fire
- Do not attempt to use or repair faulty equipment
- Electrical equipment should be switched off and disconnected when not in use for long periods
- Flexible cables should be positioned and protected so that they do not constitute a tripping hazard and are not subject to mechanical damage
- No electrical equipment is to be brought onto the premises and used until it has been tested by the approved person
- Report all faults immediately to the responsible person
- Visually check all electrical equipment before use.

### Fragile Surfaces

A fragile surface is one which would be liable to break if a person walked on it or fell onto it. Common examples include fibre and asbestos cement roof sheets and skylights.

No person at work should pass across or near, or work on, from or near, a fragile surface where it is reasonably practicable to carry out work safely and under appropriate ergonomic conditions without their doing so.

It must be ensured, so far as is reasonably practicable, that suitable and sufficient platforms, coverings, guardrails or similar means of support or protection are provided and used so that any foreseeable loading is supported by such supports or borne by such protection.

If a risk of falling remains, suitable and sufficient measures must be taken to minimise the distance and consequence of a fall.

Prominent warning notices should be fixed on the approach to any fragile surface. Access should be restricted to authorised persons only.



### Gas Safety

All gas appliances, installation pipe work and flues must be maintained in a safe condition so as to prevent risk of injury to any person.

Gas appliances must be inspected by a competent contractor who is registered with the Gas Safe Register. Any necessary work required for safety should be implemented immediately.

All registered engineers will carry a Gas Safe Register ID card with their own unique licence number. Before you have any gas work carried out, always ask to see the card. Check both sides of the card to make sure the engineer is qualified for the work you want doing and their qualifications are in date.

Further information is available on the Gas Safe Register website [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk) or call 0800 408 5500.

#### Carbon Monoxide

Unsafe gas appliances produce a highly poisonous gas called Carbon Monoxide (CO). It can cause death as well as serious long term health problems such as brain damage.

Carbon Monoxide has no taste, smell or colour. Gas Safe Register strongly recommends you fit an audible carbon monoxide alarm where there are gas appliances present in the building.

While an alarm will alert you to presence of Carbon Monoxide, it is no substitute for having an annual gas safety check and regular servicing by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

#### Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG)

LPG cylinders should be stored in an area which is properly constructed, adequately controlled and well ventilated ie outdoors.

A cylinder that has held LPG though supposedly empty will still contain LPG vapour. If the valve is left open air will diffuse into the cylinder and may form a dangerous and explosive mixture. Consequently an 'empty' LPG cylinder should always be stored under the same conditions as for 'full' LPG cylinders.

There should be no storage of LPG within 2 metres of a building opening e.g. door, window, air vent, gully.

If a gully or drain is unavoidably within 2 metres of LPG storage the opening should be securely covered or fitted with a suitable water seal to prevent the entry of vapour.



## Grave Digging

Personnel involved in the activity of grave digging should be made aware of the following precautions that should be taken to reduce the risk of injury. These guidelines are especially important as the operators may often work alone with machinery.

1. Protective clothing including overalls and protective boots must be worn at all times. Protective helmets must be worn when working in conjunction with the excavator or in the excavation. Eye protectors should be worn when breaking hard material.
2. All grave digging staff should receive training.
3. All tools and equipment required to complete each grave opening must be available and nearby before commencing the excavation.
4. All practicable steps must be taken to prevent damage and prevent burying or trapping in any depth of excavation. No soil, whatever its nature, can be relied upon to support its own weight for any length of time, let alone any additional loads which may be imposed by plant equipment and materials. Even a small fall of earth is capable of inflicting serious injury.
  - A second person should be in attendance whenever work is being carried out in an excavation of a depth greater than 3 feet (0.91m)
  - When hand digging, shoring must be incorporated as digging proceeds below a depth of 3 feet (0.91m)
  - All non-hydraulic shoring equipment must be inspected on a regular basis (monthly). Hydraulic shoring equipment must be inspected weekly to ensure that rams are in good working condition. Defective units must not be used
  - Lowering webbing and putlogs must be inspected prior to each burial to ensure that no deterioration has occurred and that they are capable of taking the weight of the coffin. Frayed webbing should be destroyed
  - Access to and from the excavation must be carried out by the use of a pole ladder
  - All spoil from the excavation must be placed at least 1m from the edge in order to minimise the risk of collapse. All edges of the grave must be protected by planks so that the weight of the persons and tools will be evenly distributed over as large an area as possible
  - All excavations must be covered by boards or a grave cover (some manufacturers of mechanical shoring equipment provide a lockable cover to ensure complete security) when digging is not in process or left unattended, particularly overnight, as normal burial procedure dictates that the grave is excavated on the day previous to the burial taking place.
5. All cuts and abrasions should be protected by a waterproof plaster. Hands and arms should be washed thoroughly before preparing or ingesting any food or drink. All personnel employed in grave digging should be required to submit themselves for tetanus immunisation at the required levels.

## Lightning Protection

A lightning strike to a church can be devastating. It is therefore important to ensure that adequate controls are in place to:

- Protect the structure of the building
- Protect people in the building and in the vicinity of the building; and
- Protect electrical equipment in the building or connected to the buildings supplies.

Advice should be sought from a competent person on the need for lightning protection, any associated works and suitable contractors.

Where installed, lightning protection should be subject to regular testing.

## Maintenance

Maintenance can take many forms and involve working at height or using hazardous chemicals. It should never be approached lightly but carefully planned. It is important to remember safe maintenance saves time, saves money and saves lives.

These five basic rules for safe maintenance provide common principles applicable to all maintenance tasks:

### 1. Planning

Maintenance should start with proper planning and consultation with all appropriate persons. The task to be carried out must be clearly defined and how it will affect other persons and activities considered.

### 2. Making the work area safe

The work area should be secured to prevent unauthorised access for example by use of barriers and signs. Safe routes for both staff carrying out maintenance and other persons should be established.

### 3. Using the appropriate equipment

The right tools for the job must be provided, in appropriate condition and suitable for the work environment.

### 4. Working as planned

Works should be monitored so that agreed safe systems of work and site rules are observed.

### 5. Final check

When all work areas have been checked and declared safe, then the maintenance task is complete and normal operations can restart.

## Slips, Trips and Falls

This type of accident accounts for one third of all major injuries, with over 33,000 related injuries reported each year in the UK. The main types of hazard include uneven, slippery or obstructed floor surfaces and poor housekeeping.

It is important to manage the risk of slips, trips and falls by implementing the following:

- clean spills immediately
- ensure good housekeeping
- highlight changes in floor level
- improve lighting levels
- maintenance of floors, stairs, carpet, nosing/edges etc.

Be aware of ...

Slips



Trips



Falls



### Work at Heights

Work at height means work in any place where, if precautions were not taken, a person could fall and injure themselves. The fall could be from one level to another including from ground level into an opening in a floor or hole in the ground.

#### What do you need to do?

There are many different activities carried out in churches which involve accessing heights. Many maintenance activities take place at height, such as replacement of high level lighting, cleaning of roofs and repair of roof mounted equipment.

Some work at height may be carried out infrequently, for example, accessing balconies for occasional maintenance whilst other tasks such as bell ringing may be carried out more frequently.

All aspects of working at heights should be risk assessed and adequate control measures implemented to prevent any injury.

#### 1. Avoid “Work at Height” where possible

Firstly you need to consider what situations require working at height, for example, changing light fittings, accessing areas at height, cleaning windows, ceilings etc.

Can you rule out the need to work at height for example through the use of a long brush for cleaning windows?

#### 2. Plan Properly

Work at height should be properly planned and adequate controls put in place to prevent any person falling a distance liable to cause personal injury.

When planning work at height the following should be considered:

- Is work at height a one off or routine task? Are fragile surfaces present?
- How are you planning to do the work safely?
- Will weather conditions affect how or when work is carried out? Will other people be affected (eg falling debris)?

#### 3. Select the correct equipment: inspect and maintain it

If working at height is unavoidable, you must try to make sure the risk of a fall is prevented by choosing the right equipment for the job. Ensure all equipment is regularly inspected and maintained. Damaged equipment must be repaired, disposed of, or taken out of use.

#### 4. Select the right people: train, supervise and monitor them

Any person working at height must be competent ie experienced in the type of work to be carried out and adequately trained. Specific training should be carried out for the use of equipment needed to access heights. Work at height should be supervised to ensure that the work is being carried out as planned, using appropriate equipment, and persons working at height trained to use the work equipment properly.

## Accidents

Accidents don’t just happen, there is always a reason for them. The first step to preventing accidents is to carry out a risk assessment. The health and safety officer must be made aware of all accidents and near misses (an incident which had the potential to cause harm) so that you can identify the hazard and take the steps needed to prevent it from happening again.

It is good practice to record in your accident book all details of accidents and near misses. However, you may need to report some of these to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) as there is a legal requirement to report certain types of accidents eg where a person working on the church premises is killed or suffers a major injury, if a member of the public is taken to hospital, or if a worker suffers an injury preventing them from working or carrying out their normal duties for more than three days.

Examples of major injury, over three day and occupational disease which require reporting include:

Major Injury	Over three day injury	Occupational Disease
Amputation	This is an injury that results in the injured person being away from work or unable to do their normal work for more than three days (including weekends or other non work days) such as strains and sprains.	Dermatitis is a skin disease which is caused by a person coming in contact with a hazardous substance  Hand-Arm vibration syndrome  Occupational asthma
Broken bone (except fingers and toes)		
Dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee or spine		
Loss of consciousness caused by electric shock, lack of oxygen or being exposed to a hazardous substance		
Loss of sight or serious injury to an eye		

Accident report forms are available on the HSENI website at <http://www.hseni.gov.uk/contact-us/report-an-incident.htm> (Online submissions are the most preferred)



# Food Safety

Catering activities may be carried out in churches for specific events, clubs or occasions. It is important that anyone preparing and handling food has a good knowledge of food safety and training may be required to ensure this is met. The kitchen facilities provided must also be able to meet the requirements of food legislation.

All food business operators must identify food safety hazards and risks relevant to their business and put in place procedures to prevent problems. They are also required to provide simple written evidence of the arrangements for making sure the food produced and sold to customers is safe. Further details on this can be found on the Food Standards Agency website [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk).

## High Risk Foods

High risk foods are those on which micro organisms grow easily. High risk foods include: ready to eat cooked meats and poultry, fish products, prepared salads, soft cheeses, sandwiches and fresh cream.

## Purchasing and Transporting High Risk Foods

- Check 'use by' dates of foods and do not accept foods past their 'use by' date
- High risk foods must be transported, stored and displayed at a temperature of 8°C or below and preferably less than 5°C
- Purchase chilled or frozen food and pack them together in a cool bag. Raw products should be packed in separate bags and not with ready to eat foods.

## Preparing Foods

- Designate an area where only ready to eat foods are prepared. Raw food should never enter this area
- Ensure separate equipment e.g. chopping boards, knives and containers are available for preparation, handling or storage of raw and cooked/ready to eat foods
- Handle cooked/ready to eat food as little as possible, use tongs where appropriate
- Store cooked/ready to eat foods above any raw foods - remember to move to a refrigeration unit as soon as possible
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect sinks after washing/preparing raw food or vegetables.

## Refrigeration

- Chilled ready to eat foods can be kept at an ambient temperature for one 4 hour period only. At the end of this period the food must be disposed of or kept chilled below 8°C until used. If you intend to make use of this exemption you must be able to provide evidence that the time period has not been exceeded
- High risk foods must be held at or below 8°C in the refrigerator (preferable less than 5°C)
- It is recommended that freezers operate at -18°C or below.

## Cooking / Reheating

- Thoroughly cook or reheat food to a core temperature at or above 75°C to kill food poisoning bacteria such as E. coli.

## Hot Holding

- If you intend to hot hold food for more than 2 hours, e.g. sausage rolls they must be at or above 63°C.

## Service

- Ready to eat foods should be served as quickly as possible after removal from the refrigerator to prevent bacteria growth. Serve hot food as quickly as possible.

## Cleaning

- Ensure adequate supply of approved disinfectant/sanitising products for cleaning equipment and work surfaces. The disinfectant/sanitising products should meet the following standard BS EN 1276:2009, BS EN 1276:1997 or equivalent
- Recommend the use of any single use disposable cloths.

## Personal Hygiene

- Cover any spots, skin cuts and abrasions (on exposed areas such as hands or lower arms) with water proof dressings. Waterproof plasters should be provided in the First Aid Kit and preferably coloured blue
- Ensure food handlers wear clean protective over clothing whilst handling unwrapped food. It is also recommended that staff with long hair wear a hair net
- Maintain a high degree of personal hygiene. This applies to 'every person' working in a food handling area whether or not they handle food
- Persons suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea must not work with food unless they have been symptom free for 48 hours
- Wash hands regularly, particularly after going to the toilet, after handling raw food, after handling rubbish, before starting work, on returning to work, after sneezing/coughing, after having a break (including smoke breaks) and after handling dirty packaging.

### Pest Control

- You must take all reasonable precautions to prevent food pests gaining entry into food storage and preparation areas. Ensure there are no gaps or holes that would allow pest entry to the premises.

### Sink and Wash Facilities

- Adequate facilities must be provided for the cleaning and disinfecting of equipment and for washing food. Ideally a double sink unit for washing and rinsing should be used with a constant supply of hot and cold water. In most operations one sink is acceptable for both equipment and food washing, provided that both activities can be carried out effectively. It will be necessary to clean and disinfect the sink between uses, in particular in circumstances where root vegetables have been handled or prepared
- All food businesses handling open high risk foods must have access to a wash hand basin. Wash hand basins are to be provided with hot and cold running water, soap and hand towels (preferably disposable).
- The application of heat (thermal disinfection) eg dishwasher is one of the most reliable ways of killing bacteria such as E. coli 0157, but it is not always practical particularly in small food businesses.

### Structural Requirements

- All internal surfaces eg floors, walls, ceilings, windows, doors and surfaces including equipment must be maintained in a sound condition and easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect. This will require the use of impervious, non-absorbent, washable and non-toxic washable materials
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation so that heat or humidity does not build up to levels that could compromise food safety and to avoid condensation
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of natural or artificial lighting
- The premises must be large enough for the type of operation carried out eg sufficient work surfaces for preparing raw and cooked/ready to eat foods so that cross contamination cannot occur.

### Training and Fitness to Work

- All food handlers are to be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters appropriate to their work activity.
- People suffering from symptoms such as food borne disease or infection, including vomiting, diarrhoea, skin infections, sores and open wounds often carry harmful bacteria on their hands and can spread them to food or equipment they touch. Food handlers should not return to work until they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours, or medical clearance is obtained.

## Licensing

If you are providing entertainment, you must ensure that the venue concerned has a valid Entertainment Licence. This applies to private functions as well as those for the general public. An Entertainment Licence is only required if a charge is made (the definition of charge is quite wide and includes any form of charge whenever paid or whether paid by money or money's worth). Exemptions can be made for religious occasions and in certain circumstances in schools.

### Entertainment Licences are provided for: -

- Indoor entertainment
- Outdoor entertainment

### Indoor Entertainment includes the following:

- Boxing matches or exhibitions and similar sports
- Circuses
- Dancing, Music, Singing or similar entertainments
- Machines for video games
- Snooker, pool or billiards and darts matches or exhibitions and similar games
- Theatrical performances.

Outdoor entertainment includes open-air concerts (whether or not there is a charge). A licence is not required for garden fetes, athletic events, religious meetings or pleasure fairs.

### Applying for an Entertainment Licence

#### 1. Grant of Entertainment Licence

The application and fee must be submitted together with a copy of the Fire Risk Assessment (prepared by a Competent Person) and 3 copies of a floor plan drawn to a scale of not less than 1:100. This plan must reflect the physical measures indicated in your Fire Risk Assessment, eg escape routes, emergency lights and fire signs/fire doors, fire alarm points, occupancy numbers for each area etc.

#### 2. Renewal / Transfer of a Licence

The application and fee must be submitted together with your revised Fire Risk Assessment (3 new plans will be required if structural alterations have taken place).

It should be noted that the application is not valid unless you also place a legal advertisement in one of the local newspapers (draft wording for this advertisement is available from the Council). Please note that a legal advertisement is not required for a 14-day occasional licence or for halls or educational establishments.

A minimum of 28 days must pass from the date the legal advertisement is published. This is to allow people to object to the licence if they wish to. During this 4-week period the Council will consult with other statutory bodies and also carry out an inspection of the venue. Normally the minimum period to license a premise would be 6 weeks however this depends greatly on the venue being technically in order and that all the required certificates are available.

**Entertainment licences are granted for a maximum of one year, are renewable and are always subject to various standard conditions to include:**

- days and hours of use
- occupant capacities
- types of entertainment that may be provided

To ensure that these conditions are maintained, the Licensing Officer will regularly inspect licensed premises when in use to determine that all conditions are being complied with and to take any necessary action should this not be the case.

## Fire Safety

A fire risk assessment is an organised and methodical look at the premises for which you have responsibility, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises.

Your fire risk assessment will allow you to make an informed decision on whether you have taken sufficient precautions or whether you need to do more to minimise the risk from fire.

The aims of a fire risk assessment:

- To identify hazards and to reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as is reasonably practicable; and
- To determine what fire safety measures and management policies are necessary to ensure the safety of people in the building should fire occur.

If you do not feel confident enough to undertake the fire risk assessment, for example, due to the complexity of the premises or the activities undertaken on them, you may wish to commission a fire safety specialist to assist you. This person should have necessary qualifications and experience etc.

There are five steps in the risk assessment process:

**Step 1:** Identify fire hazards and risks associated with the premises, materials/substances, activities etc.

**Step 2:** Identify the people, or groups of people at risk and anyone who may be especially at risk for example those working alone or in isolated areas, children or parents with babies, the elderly or infirm and people with disabilities.

**Step 3:** Evaluate the risk and decide if existing fire safety measures are adequate.

**Step 4:** Record the significant findings of your fire risk assessment.

**Step 5:** Review your fire risk assessment as risk may change over time.

If you make changes to your premises you should ensure that the assessment and risk management plan remain current.

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) enforce fire safety law.


Further information on carrying out a fire risk assessment as well as blank risk assessment templates are available on the NIFRS website [www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org).


The Government has issued a range of detailed guidance notes which can also be downloaded for free from [www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org). These include Small and Medium Sized Places of Assembly (up to 300 persons) and Large Places of Assembly (over 300 persons).

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