



NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Environmental Health Department



**A GUIDE TO
SAFETY & HEALTH
IN
CHURCHES
&
OTHER PLACES OF WORSHIP**

TAKE ACTION

If there are risks identified that need action taken to minimise the risk, then draw up an action list and give priority to the high risk hazards or those which affect most people.

Consider whether it is possible to:

- ◆ use a safer alternative
- ◆ prevent access to the hazard
- ◆ arrange work to reduce exposure to the hazard
- ◆ provide welfare facilities eg. hand washing basins
- ◆ issue personal protective equipment.

SAFETY REVIEW

Such a safety assessment needs to be reviewed periodically to make sure that precautions are still working, or where new activities have been introduced.

SO WHAT IF THINGS GO WRONG?



FIRST AID

A first aid kit should be provided which contains a sufficient quantity of suitable first-aid materials such as sterile dressings, eye pads, bandages, safety pins and moist cleaning wipes.

ACCIDENT REPORTING

Reporting of accidents and ill health to a local authority is required to enable enforcement officers to identify where and how risks arise and to advise you on preventative action to reduce injury, ill health and accidental loss.

If there is an accident where a person working on the church premises is killed or suffers a major injury, if a member of the public is killed or taken to hospital, or if a worker suffers an injury preventing them from working for more than 3 days, this should be reported to your local Environmental Health Department, using an accident report form, within 10 days.



As with any building, churches and other places of worship (and the grounds and halls associated with them) can expose users and other visitors to potential safety and health hazards if poorly maintained and managed. In addition the risks to which persons may be exposed may be increased by virtue of large congregation sizes or activities specifically involving groups such as young persons or the elderly.

This booklet is intended for persons having control of churches etc. 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 affected.

THE MAIN LAWS

The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 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.

You have duties towards people who:

- work for you (including casual workers, volunteers, sub-contractors etc)
- are allowed to use your equipment
- visit your premises (public, contractors etc)

LOOK **FOR THE HAZARDS**

A good starting point is to walk around the areas of the premises eg. the church building, church hall, grounds, offices etc, and look afresh for what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Attention should be paid to hazards that could result in serious harm, or could affect significant numbers of people.

Consulting others, such as groundsmen or cleaners, is also important as they may know of hazards that are not immediately obvious.

DECIDE WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

For each hazard encountered, consideration needs to be given as to how likely it is that it will cause harm and whether action needs to be taken to reduce the level of risk.

AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following points will provide you with a basis for assessing safety hazards in your premises. Although it identifies the main areas for consideration, it should not be regarded as exhaustive as each premises is unique.

MAIN TYPES OF RISK

MANAGING THE RISK

1. Fire Safety

- ❑ Faults in electrical wiring
- ❑ Poorly maintained heating appliances
- ❑ Cooking Equipment
- ❑ Candles
- ❑ Storage of flammable materials eg. gas cylinders, paint, cleaning fluids

- Electrical equipment maintained and faults reported and repaired immediately
- Fire fighting equipment provided and maintained
- Evacuation procedures documented
- Candles used with proper holders
- Fire alarms fitted and maintained
- Cooking equipment not left unattended
- Ensure all means of escape are properly maintained and kept free from obstruction
- Flammable materials stored in appropriate containers.



2. Slips, Trips and Falls

- ❑ Uneven, slippery or obstructed floor surfaces
- ❑ Poor housekeeping

- Maintenance of floors, stairs etc
- Good housekeeping
- Highlight changes in level
- Improve lighting levels
- Clean spills immediately

MAIN TYPES OF RISK

MANAGING THE RISK

3. General Access/Egress

- ❑ To church, halls, boiler room, bell tower etc.



- Restrict access where appropriate
- Mark or highlight steps
- Consider disabled access
- Handrails if necessary
- Regular maintenance

4. Access to Heights

- ❑ Changing light bulbs etc
- ❑ Decorating
- ❑ Dressing premises for special events



- Safe use of ladders
- Provision of suitable platforms where possible
- Use of reputable contractors as required

5. Staircases/balconies

- ❑ Falling from height due to insufficient edge protection

- Restricted access
- Secure handrails
- Adequate edge protection
- Supervision of children

6. Lone Working

- ❑ Cleaners
- ❑ Groundsmen



- Examine competence & fitness
- Provide emergency alert checks, phones etc
- Equipment suitability

MAIN TYPES OF RISK

MANAGING THE RISK

7. Electrical Safety

- Fixed electrics
- Portable appliances

- Fixed electrics should be checked by a competent electrician every 5 years
- Regular checks of all portable appliances including plugs, cables, fuses etc
- Outdoor electrical equipment should be supplied through a circuit protected by a 30 mA residual current device
- Keep water and electric apart

8. Grounds Maintenance

- Grass-cutting, hedge trimming etc.
- Pesticide use



- Suitable and maintained equipment
- Protective equipment (eg. eye goggles, gloves, footwear)
- Use only approved pesticides
- Obtain safety information from supplier and ensure its availability
- Compliance with COSHH* regulations.

* Control of Substances Hazardous to Health
Further information available from local EH Department

9. Graveyards

- Gravedigging
- Headstone stability

- Open graves not left unattended/uncovered
- Safe systems of work
- Suitable equipment
- Routine checks/maintenance

MAIN TYPES OF RISK

MANAGING THE RISK

10. Manual Handling

- Handling heavy loads eg. chair stacks



- Seek assistance when lifting heavy items where possible
- Supply mechanical aids eg. trolleys, where practicable
- Provide advice on proper lifting technique

11. Violence/Personal Security

- Robbery of goods or cash may place persons at risk of violence

- Consider security measures
- Avoid lone working

12. Use of Vehicles

- Eg. buses used for outings

- Regular maintenance
- Competence of driver
- Consider use of seat belts for passengers



13. Young Persons

- Youth groups
- Child care (creche)
- Sunday School

- Suitability of premises for activities
- Suitability of equipment and maintenance
- Adequate supervision
- Training for supervisors

MAIN TYPES OF RISK

MANAGING THE RISK

14. Burns/Scalds

Central heating system including radiators and associated pipework
Catering activities (eg. water boiler)

- Regular maintenance
- Provision of guarding to radiators
- Train users in safe use of catering equipment

15. Use of Chemicals

Cleaning materials
Solvents/paints



- Apply COSHH Regs *
- Provision of suitable gloves etc.

** Control of Substances Hazardous to Health
Further advice available from Environmental Health Department*

16. Office Area

- ❑ Prolonged use of VDU's may cause eyestrain and muscular fatigue
- ❑ Slips, trips and falls

- Assess individual workstation and look at lighting, layout etc
- Provide staff with information, instruction and training
- Good housekeeping.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE CONTACT:

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