

Church SAFETY

ChurchSafety InfoSheet: Health and Safety Policies

A written Health and Safety policy is a document that outlines the safety measures and responsibilities in your Church or Place of Worship. It is a legal requirement to have a written policy and a central part of Health and Safety Management.

There is no set format for a Health and Safety Policy, but it should aim to provide a written commitment about how Health and Safety is being managed for the long term.

Most Health and Safety Policies have three main sections:

1. A general statement of the policy
2. Details of the organisational responsibilities and management of safety
3. Details of the arrangements for safety and procedures for the premises

Policy Statement

The first section of the policy would cover a general statement of policy. This is usually short (one side of A4 paper is normal) and should cover, in the broadest terms, how health and safety is being managed. This includes general responsibilities for safety (including that of members of staff and volunteers), arrangements for Risk Assessment and details of how the policy will be implemented.

The Health and Safety Policy Statement must be on permanent display. There is also a requirement to display a "Health and Safety Law" poster (which is available from all good bookshops) or alternatively pocket-cards can be given to every member of staff and volunteer. It is often useful to display the Employer's Liability Insurance certificate in the same place too.

The example later on in this InfoSheet can be used to help you with your Health and Safety Policy Statement. There are no hard-and-fast rules and the exact document will depend on your circumstances. You can copy the text into a word processor and add to it and adjust it as needed.

Organisation and responsibility

In this section of the policy, people are identified that have specific responsibilities for people's safety. The overall responsibility for Health and Safety usually lies with the minister or religious leader. Additionally, those people with responsibilities over others (such as a Choir Master) and likely to have responsibility for their safety, and this needs to be identified in the policy.

In some situations, a member of the congregation, an external consultant or some other person provides a level of assistance for Health and Safety. These people should be identified along with their roles and responsibilities. However, it must be realised that these people are not likely to have overall control of the premises, which means that they do not have overall control of Health and Safety.

It is recommended that a safety committee is formed in most Churches and Places of Worship. For many smaller situations, the role of the safety committee could be included in another committee (such as a PCC). There need to be details in the policy about when the committee will meet, who is involved and the role and function of the committee.

It must be stressed in this section that every member of staff and every volunteer is directly responsible for their own safety and the safety of those that could be affected by their actions and their omissions.

This section of the policy should also consider how hazards will be identified and who is responsible for carrying out Risk Assessment.

Procedures and arrangements for safety

This section covers in detail the arrangements for people's Health and Safety that have been identified in the Risk Assessment, along with the statutory requirements of Health and Safety Law. As such, this section is very much unique to each and every Church or Place of Worship and needs to be updated and modified as needed.

It might be beneficial in this section to identify the hazards that members of staff and volunteers might be exposed to, along with the precautions that have been put into place. This follows on directly from the Risk Assessment (a separate InfoSheet has been produced covering Risk Assessment).

Training needs and plans should be identified within this section of the policy. This might include, for example, an initial safety briefing given to new volunteers and a plan for regular refresher courses. Additional information, instruction and training might need to be given to certain people or groups of people.

It is essential that foreseeable emergencies are identified and plans are made. For a Church or Place of Worship, it would be typical to have a plan for fire

evacuation but it might also be necessary to have plans for power failures and situations such as a gas leak. It is also a requirement of the Fire Regulations to have suitable plans for fire evacuations.

There are many possible topics that can be considered within this section of the policy. The below points are some of the most common - some might not be needed for some Churches and Places of Worship, while others might need to be added to ensure the policy covers all of the necessary points.

- ✓ Access to confined spaces
- ✓ Access to restricted areas
- ✓ Asbestos
- ✓ Chemicals and substances
- ✓ Display screens
- ✓ Emergency lighting
- ✓ Exit routes and exit doors
- ✓ Fire alarms and detectors
- ✓ Fire and evacuation procedures
- ✓ Fire extinguishers
- ✓ First aid
- ✓ Hazard identification
- ✓ Lone working and personal security
- ✓ Maintenance and testing of safety equipment
- ✓ Manual handling
- ✓ Risk assessment
- ✓ Slips and trips
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ Training and instruction
- ✓ Working at height

In larger Churches and Places of Worship, it might prove beneficial to produce a separate document covering the fire evacuation plans where the procedures are more complex.

The Health and Safety Policy might also include instructions on performing certain tasks (such as using grounds-keeping equipment safely and maintaining it properly). Additionally, various forms and other documents can be attached as an appendix to keep all of the essential paperwork in one central place.

Monitoring the policy

The Health and Safety Policy should include details of how the policies and procedures will be checked. Inspections of the premises are a good way to ensure that all equipment is in place and there are no additional hazards within the area. The exact way in which you check the policies and procedures is entirely up to you.

Example of a Health and Safety Policy

The below example shows the general format of a Health and Safety Policy, starting with the statement. This is only intended as an example, and it would need modification and alteration prior to use. Remember that there is no set format for a Health and Safety Policy - every Church and Place of Worship is unique so each needs a unique policy.

Only a small selection of "Procedures and Safety Arrangements" have been shown, and many other categories are usually needed. The contents of the sections include a number of examples of the typical safety precautions that are required.

Health and Safety Policy Document

General statement

We are committed to the Health, Safety and Welfare of our members of staff, our volunteers and the members of the public that use our premises. Our aim is to ensure that our premises are a safe work and worship environment for all by controlling the hazards in and around our premises and the hazards caused by what we do. We aim to prevent all work-related injuries and ill health.

We have completed Risk Assessments and will regularly review them. We will consult with you about Health and Safety and provide you with the information, instruction, supervision and training that we consider necessary.

We will make sure that you are kept safe by carrying out inspections and performing health surveillance as required. We will maintain equipment and the premises and provide any Personal Protective Equipment that we consider necessary for your Health and Safety.

You are asked to help us maintain a health and safe work and worship environment by reporting hazards, accidents and dangerous occurrences. You are asked to look after the safety equipment we provide and to follow safety instructions and signs.

You are reminded that you are responsible for your own safety and the safety of others using these premises.

This policy will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary.

Organisation and Responsibility

The overall responsibility for Health and Safety lies with the minister.

The following people are responsible for Health and Safety:

Name / Responsibility

If you need any more information or have any concerns about Health and Safety, please contact one of the people above.

Members of staff and volunteers are reminded that they are responsible for their own Health and Safety and the safety of the others in the premises.

The Church Committee will be responsible for discussing matters surrounding Health and Safety. This committee meets every three months, of which no less than 10 minutes will be devoted to Health and Safety issues. Any member of the committee should be contacted to discuss and raise safety issues with this committee.

Procedures and Safety Arrangements:

Chemicals

Hazardous chemicals, identified by an orange warning symbol, will be assessed for safety using a COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) assessment. This will be completed by the Minister and will be reviewed annually. COSHH assessments are kept in the Health and Safety Folder and near to the Chemical Stores.

No hazardous substance is to be used or stored on the premises that does not have a COSHH assessment.

Ensure that the door to the Chemical Store is always locked shut and all chemicals are correctly stored in the cupboard.

Please ensure that you follow all of the manufacturer's guidance and follow any additional information in the COSHH assessment. Ensure that you are familiar with the precautions that you might need to take in the event of an emergency involving the substance.

Electrical equipment and wiring

The electrical wiring within the building(s) will be inspected annually, or at a duration that has been suggested by the contractor performing the tests. A NICEIC contractor will perform the periodic inspection and test in accordance with BS7671 (formerly the IE Wiring Regulations).

No person is to make any alterations to the electrical installation without prior agreement from the Minister.

Portable electrical appliances will be maintained, inspected and tested routinely. This will be done annually, or at a duration that has been suggested by the contractor performing the tests.

Certificates of wiring inspections, alterations and portable appliance test records will be kept in the Health and Safety File.

Please ensure that electrical equipment is used safely, following the manufacturer's instructions. Do not overload sockets, avoid using extension leads and take care to prevent tripping hazards when laying cables.

Fire Extinguishers

The Fire Extinguishers within the premises will be periodically examined and tested as recommended by the Service Company. The Service Company will also advise on the purchase of replacement or supplemental equipment. The certificate for the inspection and test will be displayed for one year (or until the next inspection and

test), after which it will be kept on file.

Fire extinguishers will be examined for damage and use monthly by the Minister.

Extinguishers must not be removed from their locations except in an emergency, or for the purposes of carrying out maintenance.

Fire extinguishers should only be used by persons competent and trained in their safe use.

First Aid

A number of first aid kits are available throughout the building and are clearly marked. If the contents of any first aid kit is used, the Minister must be informed.

Suitable trained and competent persons should only administer first aid.

First aid kits will be checked monthly by the Minister to ensure that the contents have not been used, that none of the contents have expired and that no medicines or other preparations are contained within the kit.

Risk Assessment

The Minister will identify hazards and perform a Risk Assessment. The outcome of this assessment will be recorded and kept in the Health and Safety Folder. The significant findings of this assessment will be made available to Staff and Volunteers through information, instruction and training.

Where actions are needed to reduce or eliminate risk, the Minister will decide a time scale by which the corrective actions are to be completed. This will be based on the principle of "As Low As Reasonably Practicable".

Any person discovering a hazard must inform the Minister as soon as possible. In the case of serious and immediate danger, the correct emergency procedures must be followed.

Produced by ChurchSafety
*Improving the understanding of Health and Safety in UK Places of
Worship*

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Need further help?

You can get advice about Health and Safety from your Environmental Health Department, which is part of your local District or Borough Council and fire safety advice is available from your local Fire Brigade.

If you are part of a larger organisation, there is usually someone you can contact to get advice and information from.

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