



Derry City and Strabane District  
Council

*Environmental Health Department*



A GUIDE TO  
SAFETY & HEALTH IN  
CHURCHES, CHURCH HALLS &  
OTHER PLACES OF WORSHIP

**This document was originally produced by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.**

**INVESTIGATE**

To avoid a repeat occurrence, any accident or indeed “near miss” should always be investigated; your local Environmental Health Department will be happy to assist you in this process if needed.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE CONTACT:**

Email: [healthandsafety@derrystرابane.com](mailto:healthandsafety@derrystرابane.com)

## 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 e.g. 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.



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*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.*

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## **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 e.g. 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 grounds men 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.

| <u>MAIN TYPES OF RISK</u> | <u>MANAGING THE RISK</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

**14. Burns/Scalds**

Central heating system including radiators and associated pipe work  
Catering activities (e.g. 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.

|                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>MAIN TYPES OF RISK</u> | <u>MANAGING THE RISK</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

**1. Fire Safety**

## 10. Manual Handling

- Handling heavy loads e.g. chair stacks



- Seek assistance when lifting heavy items where possible
- Supply mechanical aids e.g. 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



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

## 2. Slips, Trips and Falls

- Uneven, slippery or obstructed floor surfaces
- Poor housekeeping

- Faults in electrical wiring
- Poorly maintained heating appliances
- Cooking Equipment
- Candles
- Storage of flammable materials e.g. 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.

- E.g. buses used for outings

## 13. Young Persons

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

MAIN TYPES OF RISK

MANAGING THE RISK

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

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

**3. General Access/Egress**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Safe use of ladders</li> <li>▪ Provision of suitable platforms where possible</li> <li>▪ Use of reputable contractors as required</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Restrict access where appropriate</li> <li>▪ Mark or highlight steps</li> <li>▪ Consider disabled access</li> <li>▪ Handrails if necessary</li> <li>▪ Regular maintenance</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Suitable and maintained equipment</li> <li>▪ Protective equipment (e.g. eye goggles, gloves, footwear)</li> <li>▪ Use only approved pesticides</li> <li>▪ Obtain safety information from supplier and ensure its availability</li> <li>▪ Compliance with COSHH* regulations.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Falling from height due to insufficient edge protection</li> </ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Restricted access</li> <li>▪ Secure handrails</li> <li>▪ Adequate edge protection</li> <li>▪ Supervision of children</li> </ul>  |

**Maintenance**

**5. Staircases/balconies**

**6. Lone Working**

\* Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

- ❑ Cleaners
- ❑ Groundsmen



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

**7. Electrical Safety 8. Grounds**

- ❑ Fixed electrics
- ❑ Portable appliances

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



- 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

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



**4. Access to Heights**

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



Further information available from local EH Department

**9. Graveyards**

- ❑ Grave digging
- ❑ Headstone stability

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