



LISBURN  
CITY COUNCIL

# A Guide to Health and Safety in Churches & Places of Worship



ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICE

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# Introduction



## Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978

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 e.g. employees, contractors, general public etc.



Health and Safety is an increasingly important part of everyday life in work, at home and in Churches and Places of Worship.

Every year a number of accidents occur in churches, church halls, churchyards and in connection with church activities. Not only does this cause pain and 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 a minister, 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 Environmental Health Service at Lisburn City Council is responsible for enforcing Health and Safety Legislation in premises of religious worship and church social events.

This booklet is intended to help explain the legal Health and Safety requirements and may assist you in defending public liability claims. It describes the main types of hazards associated with places of worship and the precautions that can help to safeguard both workers/volunteers and the Church.

# Your Legal Requirements

## Health and Safety Policy

Where you employ five or more people, the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 requires you to have a written Health and Safety Policy.

The format of the policy should include:

- 1. Policy Statement** – Expressing your commitment to Health and Safety
- 2. Organisation/Responsibility** – Explaining who does what to ensure that Health and Safety rules are implemented
- 3. Arrangements** – Describing procedures in place to reduce risk of injury.

## Health and Safety Poster

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: The Stationery Office, 16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4DG Telephone (028) 9023 8451.**

## Accident Reporting

An accident book should be kept on the premises to record details of all accidents which occur to employees, members of the public and others.

Certain accidents are reportable to your local Environmental Health Department namely Lisburn City Council Environmental Health. This will enable Enforcement Officers to identify where and how risks arise and to advise you on preventative action to reduce risk of 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 taken to hospital, or if a worker suffers an injury preventing them from working for more than three days, this should be reported to Lisburn City Council.

## 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. Tablets and medications should not be kept.



## Appointed Health and Safety Person

Environmental Health would suggest that every Church appoints a member with specific responsibility for health and safety. This person should lead a small sub-committee who should be given the responsibility of carrying out the various assessments outlined below and of implementing the outcomes of the assessment.

## Risk Assessments

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000, every employer is required to make 'a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and the risks to the health and safety of persons not in their employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by them of their undertaking'.

Risk Assessment is about looking around the building to assess the things that are most likely to cause someone harm. It is designed to make you think about your building and decide for yourself what you

need to do to reduce the risks.

Where there are more than five people employed, the Risk Assessment, including all significant findings, must be written down and incorporated into your Health and Safety Policy. Findings should also be communicated to all persons who could be affected by the risk. In order to ensure that precautions are working effectively, Risk Assessments should be reviewed periodically, particularly when new activities have been introduced.

The following list 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 premise is unique.

**Risk Assessment Form**

Name and address of Place of Worship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person who did the assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is there anyone present at times?	2. Is the ground or floor level safe and free from obstructions?	3. Is the building, structure or equipment safe to use?	4. Are there any fire risks?	5. Is any additional equipment used?

**A Sample Risk Assessment Layout is enclosed at the end of this booklet, which may be detached and photocopied for your use.**



Fire fighting equipment should be regularly tested and maintained. Care should be taken with naked flames.

## Main Types of Hazard

Faults in electrical wiring

Poorly maintained heating appliances, especially supersers and electric heaters

Cooking equipment

Candles

Storage of flammable materials e.g. gas cylinders, paint, cleaning fluids.

## Managing the Risk

Electrical equipment should be maintained and faults reported and repaired immediately

Cooking equipment should not be left unattended

Candles used with proper holders

Flammable materials stored in appropriate containers

Fire alarms properly fitted and maintained

Fire fighting equipment provided and maintained

Ensure all means of escape are properly maintained and kept free from obstruction

Evacuation procedures documented

Fire Risk Assessments should be carried out – the Fire Authority can advise on these

# 2 Slips, Trips and Falls



This type of accident accounts for 1/3 of all major injuries, with over 33,000 related injuries reported each year.

## Main Types of Hazard

Uneven, slippery or obstructed floor surfaces

Poor housekeeping

## Managing the Risk

Maintenance of floors, stairs, carpet, nosing/edges etc.

Ensure good housekeeping

Highlight changes in floor level

Improve lighting levels

Clean spills immediately.



Care should be taken on irregular and polished surfaces.

# 3 General Access/Egress



## Main Types of Hazard

Access to church, halls, boiler room, bell tower etc.

## Managing the Risk

Restrict access where appropriate

Mark or highlight steps

Consider disabled access

Handrails if necessary

Regular maintenance.

Inspect and regularly maintain external fixtures.

# 4 Access to Heights



## Main Types of Hazard

Changing light bulbs etc.

Decorating

Dressing premises for special events e.g. harvest, Christmas, weddings etc.

## Managing the Risk

Safe use of ladders

Provision of suitable platforms where possible

Use of reputable contractors as required.



Take extreme care when working at height.

# 5 Staircase / Balconies



Secure any loose fitting carpet.



Regularly inspect security of edge protection.

## Main Types of Hazard

Falling from height due to insufficient edge protection e.g. barriers/railings

Horseplay.

## Managing the Risk

Restricted access

Secure handrails and ensure adequate edge protection

Supervision of children.

# 6 Lone Working



Carefully select and train those maintaining grounds or property.

## Main Types of Hazard

Cleaners, Groundsmen and Gardeners.

## Managing the Risk

Examine competence and fitness of individuals

Provide emergency alert checks, phones etc.

Equipment suitability.

# 7 Electrical Safety



## Main Types of Hazard

Fixed electrics

Portable appliances e.g. heaters.

## Managing the Risk

Fixed electrics should be checked by a competent electrician every five years

Regular checks on all portable appliances including plugs, cables, fuses etc.

Outdoor electrical equipment should be supplied through a circuit protected by a 30mA residual current device (RCD)

Keep water and electric separate.



Ensure electrical equipment is checked by a competent and qualified person.

# 8 Grounds Maintenance



## Main Types of Hazard

Grass cutting, hedge trimming etc.

Pesticide use.



Carefully select and train those maintaining grounds or property.

## Managing the Risk

Suitable and well-maintained equipment

Protective equipment (e.g. eye goggles, gloves, footwear)

Use only approved pesticides

Obtain safety information from supplier and ensure its availability to the user.

# 9 Graveyards



## Main Types of Hazard

Grave digging

Headstone stability.



Regularly inspect graveyards for signs of deterioration, collapse or damage.

## Managing the Risk

Open graves not left unattended/uncovered

Safe systems of work for grave digging

Suitable equipment

Routine checks/maintenance.

# 10 Manual Handling



## Main Types of Hazard

Handling heavy loads e.g. chair stacks, tables, pianos, equipment.

## Managing the Risk

Avoid manual handling where possible

Seek assistance when lifting heavy items where possible

Supply mechanical aids e.g. trolleys, where practicable

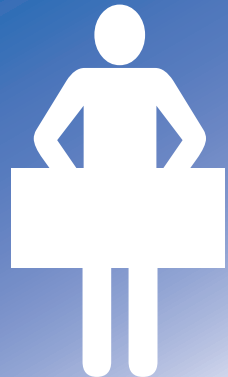
Provide advice on proper lifting techniques.

## Manual Handling – Proper Lifting Techniques

The following rules should be observed:

1. Stand close to the load
2. Bend your knees and keep your back straight
3. Grasp the load firmly
4. Lift with the legs and not your back
5. Never lift a load that is too heavy –

**GET HELP**



# 11 Violence/Personal Security



## Main Types of Hazard

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

## Managing the Risk

Consider security measures

Avoid lone working.

# 12 Use of Vehicles



## Main Types of Hazard

Vehicles used for outings e.g. minibuses, coaches

Vehicular movement around buildings and in car park.

## Managing the Risk

Regular maintenance of vehicles

Competence of drivers

Consider use of seat belts for all passengers

Markings and spacings clearly defined in car parks

Directional arrows and illustrated signage

Speed Limit signs.



# 13 Young Persons



## Main Types of Hazard

Slips, trips and falls, burns, electrocution and general accidents at:

Youth Groups

Child Care (crèche)

Sunday School.

## Managing the Risk

Suitability of premises for activities

Suitability of equipment and maintenance

Adequate supervision

Training for supervisors.

# 14 Burns/Scalds



## Main Types of Hazard

Central heating systems including radiators and associated pipe work

Catering activities (e.g. water boilers, tea pots etc.)

## Managing the Risk

Regular maintenance of heating system and thermostat

Provision of guarding to radiators e.g. in crèche

Train users in safe use of catering equipment

Restrict access to kitchen facilities.

# 15 Use of Chemicals



Use less hazardous chemicals where possible.

## Main Types of Hazard

Cleaning materials

Solvents/paints

Petrol, liquefied petroleum gases

Pesticides, insecticides,  
weed killers, fertilisers.

## Managing the Risk

Carry out an assessment of hazardous chemicals used on the premises (normally labelled toxic, harmful, irritant, corrosive)

Substitute dangerous substances for less hazardous alternatives

Use and store hazardous substances in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions

Provision of suitable gloves etc.

Use of professional contractors where possible.

# 16 Office Area



## Main Types of Hazard

Prolonged use of VDUs may cause eyestrain and muscular fatigue

Slips, trips and falls

Manual handling.

## Managing the Risk

Assess individual workstation and look at lighting, layout, etc.

Provide staff with information, instruction and training

Good housekeeping

Good ventilation and lighting.



Provide employees or volunteers with safe work practices.

# 17 Asbestos



## Main Types of Hazard

Breathing in air containing asbestos fibres can lead to serious illnesses, such as cancer of the lungs and chest.

Anyone who uses your premises and disturbs asbestos will be at risk e.g. electricians, plumbers, maintenance workers, joiners and perhaps even cleaners.

## Managing the Risk

Carry out an Asbestos Assessment to find out if asbestos is present in your church, church halls and other properties owned by the church.

Asbestos in good condition and unlikely to be disturbed does not have to be removed. If removal is required this work can only be carried out by contractors licensed by the Health and Safety Executive (NI) for asbestos removal.



Consider the presence of asbestos in your premises.

# Useful Contacts



## **Health and Safety Unit Environmental Health Service Lisburn City Council**

Island Civic Centre  
The Island  
Lisburn  
BT27 4RL  
T: 028 9250 9250  
E: [ehealth@lisburn.gov.uk](mailto:ehealth@lisburn.gov.uk)  
[www.lisburncity.gov.uk](http://www.lisburncity.gov.uk)

## **General Fire Safety and Fire Risk Assessment Advice**

Contact your local Fire Authority

## **Disability Discrimination Act – Information and advice can be obtained from:**

### **Disability Action**

Portside Business Park  
189 Airport Road  
Belfast  
BT3 9ED  
T: 028 9029 7882

### **The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

Equality House  
7 – 9 Shaftsbury Square  
Belfast  
BT2 7DP  
T: 028 9050 0589

### **Child Protection Advice Down and Lisburn Trust Family and Childcare Unit**

Linenhall Street  
Lisburn  
BT28 1LU  
T: 028 9266 5181

# Risk Assessment Form Contd.

1. List the important hazards in your place of worship Contd.	2. List the groups of people who are at risk from the hazard Contd.	3. List the existing Control Measures you have in place Contd.



	4. Evaluate the risk (High, Medium, Low) Contd.	5. List any additional Control Measures required Contd.





# Risk Assessment Form

Name and address of place of worship \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person who carried out the Assessment \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Assessment \_\_\_\_\_

1. List the important hazards in your place of worship

2. List the groups of people who are at risk from the hazard

3. List the existing Control Measures you have in place





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\_\_\_\_\_ Review date \_\_\_\_\_

	4. Evaluate the risk (High, Medium, Low)	5. List any additional Control Measures required



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Lisburn City Council, on request, will take all reasonable steps to provide this document in alternative formats and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

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IT'S THE CITY FOR... EVERYONE

[www.lisburncity.gov.uk](http://www.lisburncity.gov.uk)