

Bellringing



A number of churches have approached us for advice about bellringing demonstrations for the public on Heritage Open Days and similar events.

Churches and Tower Captains may occasionally wish to demonstrate the art of bellringing to the general public or simply to attract new people to learn how to ring. While bellringers will be well aware of the risks involved in entering church towers, the public may not, so we would ask you to make sure you read the guidelines below.

Your Ecclesiastical policy will cover the legal liability of parishes for injury to members of the public incurred following accidents during tower tours, open days and events provided all reasonable precautions are taken.

Every tower is different, so each Tower Captain of any church planning a demonstration will need to carry out their own risk assessment. To help you, we have a risk assessment form at www.ecclesiastical.com/safety. Our checklist below will help you with your risk assessment.

These are some examples of things to consider. This list is not exhaustive.

- Have you worked out how many people, including ringers, you believe can safely be accommodated in the ringing chamber at any one time?
- Is all access to the tower by safe means with ladders and hatches avoided where possible?
- Have you made sure you have clearly documented instructions on safety, covering, for example, not touching ropes, keeping feet on the ground and keeping out of the way whilst ringing in progress?
- Have you planned how these will be communicated and understood before visitors enter the ringing chamber?
- Have you arranged to have some experienced ringers on hand to steward and supervise whilst ringing is in progress?

Risk Advice Line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

- If there are stairs to climb to the ringing chamber, have you checked for trip hazards?
- If there is a climb, how will you ensure that visitors are fit enough to undertake the climb?
- Do you have a prepared evacuation procedure in place in case of an unforeseen emergency?
- Have you made sure you have working mobile phones or alternative communication equipment to be able to raise the alarm without delay should anything go wrong?

Viewing the bells

If visitors are being allowed to see the bells as part of the experience, unless the tower incorporates specific arrangements for viewing the bells it is highly recommended that this is a visual inspection from the doorway of the bell chamber only. We recommend that bells are not rung while the visit is taking place, unless this is a single bell tolling to demonstrate how a bell works.

It remains the responsibility of the Tower Captain to assess what is practicable and safe given the arrangement and location of the ringing chamber, bell chamber and if appropriate any access to the roof.

If any public access to the roof is desired, please follow the rules and guidance in our Church Health and Safety Guidance Notes, which you can read at www.ecclesiastical.com/safety.

Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available at www.ecclesiastical.com/healthandsafety

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Need to report an incident involving an injury?

If an incident occurs that may result in a claim for injury, please retain any accident investigation records, e.g. accident book entry, photos etc. and contact our specialist claims team on **0345 603 8381** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm) for advice. Where you have received correspondence about a claim being made against you, it is important that you notify us immediately and email a copy to our experts on casualtyclaims@ecclesiastical.com.

Policy cover queries

For queries about your policy cover, call our specialist church team on **0345 777 3322** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at churches@ecclesiastical.com.

Alternatively, please visit www.ecclesiastical.com/church.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.



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