

Conditions of use applying to change – ringing bells



As a general rule, bells should always be left in the 'down' position other than for ringing. This is accepted good practice and provides new ringers with practice in 'ringing up' and 'ringing down'. It also reduces corrosion to the clapper bolt caused by moisture collecting in the bells.

From a health and safety perspective, it is extremely hazardous for bells to be left 'up', particularly if firefighters or others need to enter the tower or if unauthorised persons, including children, interfere with the ropes. Where local circumstances require bells to be left in the 'up' position, these notes include guidance to bell ringers in implementing safe practices. The notes indicate a general safe case that should be interpreted to meet each unique local situation and are regularly reviewed with the 'Central Council of Church Bell Ringers'.

General

Bells should be left in the 'down' position when not in use.

If bells are left in the 'up' position, then the ropes must be hoisted towards the ceiling on a 'spider' and locked in position. Notices warning that the bells are 'up' and that the ropes must not be touched should be displayed in the ringing chamber. The access door to the bell chamber must be kept locked, a danger notice exhibited and any keys kept in the control of the Ringing Master or deputy, and any person who is authorised by the Ringing Master and churchwardens. If access is required to the bell chamber whilst the bells are 'up', then this must be under the control of the Ringing Master or deputy, or any suitably experienced person.

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.

Adult ringers

The resident Ringing Master, or other person responsible for tower safety, must take reasonable steps to ensure that they are satisfied that all adult ringers (those aged 18 years and over) including visiting ringers are competent, or are in the process of being trained in bell ringing. 'Competent' means that ringers have sufficient experience in the opinion of the Ringing Master. The Ringing Master must warn visiting ringers of the particular circumstances attached to the tower.

Junior ringers

Junior ringers must be suitably experienced or be in the process of being taught to ring. It should be at the discretion of the Ringing Master as to whether or not a child is suitable. At least one responsible adult other than the Ringing Master (e.g. the parent of one of the children present, or an experienced adult ringer) must be present when children are in the bell tower. A record may be maintained of each junior ringer's instruction and training, and their level of competence.

Special conditions concerning heavy rings of bells

Rings of bells where the tenor weighs 20cwt or more may additionally be left in the 'up' position providing that the following conditions are met.

The bell-frame must be secured against any person being able to come into contact with the bells without the authority of the Ringing Master. This may be done by caging in the bell-frame, fencing any walkway or securing any door adjacent to the bell-frame with materials sufficiently robust to prevent access.

Access to the bells shall remain in the control of the Ringing Master or deputy, or any person who is authorised by the Ringing Master and churchwardens, whilst the bells are up. Where no access route to another part of the building passes through the bell chamber, the access door to the bell chamber itself may be considered the controlled door.

Turning the clappers of bells up 'wrong'

Where it is necessary to turn the clapper of a bell to the 'right' side after ringing bells 'up' then the following must be observed:

- The procedure for turning the clapper must be specified in detail. A copy shall be displayed prominently in the ringing chamber
- Only the Ringing Master or other trained deputy shall be allowed to carry out the procedure.

Bell maintenance

All maintenance should be undertaken with the bells 'down' either by, or under the direction of, the Steeple Keeper. A second person should be present with the Steeple Keeper during maintenance operations to assist and take action in the event of an emergency. Lone working should be avoided. However, where this is not possible, a Steeple Keeper working alone amongst the bells must take steps to advise another responsible person of their proposed activity and timescale. They should advise the responsible person of the likely time of the completion of the task. Failing receipt of such advice, the responsible person must take immediate steps to ascertain the safety of the Steeple Keeper.

Unauthorised access to the ringing chamber must be prohibited whilst work is being undertaken on the bells and/or bell frame.

Definitions

- **Ringling Master**
Otherwise Tower Captains or Conductor, being the person with delegated powers from the Incumbent, PCC or alternative authority, with responsibility for the ringing of the bells and safety within the tower.
- **Steeple Keeper**
The person with delegated responsibility for the general maintenance of the bells.
- **Spider**
Rope and pulley system with hook upon which the ropes can be hung and drawn up towards the ceiling.
- **Ringling room**
Room or area from which the bells are rung.
- **Bell chamber**
The area of the tower in which the bell-frame is located.
- **'Up' position**
The bell at rest with the mouth upwards, supported by the stay and slider mechanism, in readiness for 'full circle' ringing.
- **'Down' position**
The bell mouth downwards and at rest.
- **'Wrong' position**
Having rung the bell 'up', the clapper is resting against the higher side of the bell mouth (the 'wrong' side) and before ringing can commence, the clapper has to be moved over to the lower side.

Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

Further information and guidance can be found at www.cccbr.org.uk/resources/stewardship-and-management/

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.



Proudly part of the **BENEFACT GROUP** 