



Keeping People Safe

CHURCH HEALTH & SAFETY TOOLKIT

Events





Many churches host major services (for example, at Christmas or Easter time), concerts and public performances, as well as a diverse range of fundraising events (including fêtes, firework displays, charity walks and even abseiling down towers, etc.).

Most of the time, such activities represent little or no additional risk. However, larger events or unusual fundraising activities can present more significant ones. These will need to be properly managed to ensure people remain safe. This may involve detailed planning before the event starts and monitoring some of the precautions that have been put in place during it.

Because of the diverse nature of the events that can be held, this information is not exhaustive. It is only aimed at providing some insight into the types of things for consideration, along with a general approach that could be adopted. You may need to look at more detailed guidance provided by others depending on the nature of the event you intend to hold.

Any action you take needs to be proportionate. This will reflect the size and nature of the event, the size and location of your church or other venue, the numbers of employees and volunteers who will be involved, the number of visitors you expect to attend, and the nature of the activities involved in the event itself.

Legal Requirements

If you are an employer hosting an event, you must comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the relevant regulations made under it.

Generally, you will need to ensure that the event is properly managed so that people remain safe. You may also need to:

- Complete risk assessments to identify the precautions you need to take
- Implement those precautions, providing information and training for any employees and volunteers on what they need to do
- Document your arrangements and responsibilities for hosting events, perhaps as part of your health and safety policy
- Keep records of what you have done.



Even if you are not an employer, you may still have to comply with certain aspects of the Act or other related law. For example, if you control non-domestic premises, such as a church hall, you may need to make sure that premises are safe during any event. Beyond this, you also need to meet your common law duty of care, ensuring that any event does not cause injury to another because you have acted negligently.

Furthermore, some events may require a license from your local authority.

Further advice and guidance is available from:



[Your local council](#)



[The Scottish Government](#)



[The Department of Culture, Media and Sport](#)

Hazards to look out*

While considering what safety precautions you may need to implement, here are some of the hazards you might need to look out for:

- Large or unsupervised crowds
- Unsafe pedestrian or vehicular access to the event site or building
- The provision or sale of alcohol
- Attractions including bouncy castles or fairground rides
- Hazardous materials or equipment
- Fire, bonfires and fireworks
- Unsafe car parking facilities
- The preparation and sale of food
- Security and cash handling
- Temporary demountable structures (for example, stages, seating, tents, marquees, etc.)
- Temporary gas appliances
- Manual handling
- Electrical installations and portable electrical appliances
- Animals and animal exhibitions (for example, donkey or pony rides, pet shows and obedience trials)*

Making a start

Action

1

Consider the viability of hosting the event you want to hold, given the venue, resources and expertise available to you.

Plan the event, completing any necessary risk assessments if you are required to do so.

If the scale and nature of the event warrants it, prepare a specific event safety plan.

Guidance

To do this, you will need to think about the:

- Scale, type and scope of the event
- Type and size of the crowd or audience you expect to attend
- Numbers of employees, volunteers and others (for example, contractors) who will be involved in it
- Characteristics of the event location (for example, size)
- Duration of the event
- Time of day and year it will be held
- Type of activities or equipment involved in the event itself.

Having done this, you may then want to decide:

- If you have enough knowledge about health and safety to organise the event properly yourself. Usually, this will be the case for smaller events involving normal activities. However, for some much larger or complex ones, you may want to seek further advice
- Who will have overall responsibility for health and safety during the event, making sure that everyone is clear on this
- If the venue is suitable (for example, considering its size, numbers of entrances/exits, safety signage, fire precautions, safe access and egress, car parking facilities, other traffic implications, the need to comply with the terms of any lease, tenancy or similar agreement, etc.)

Action

Guidance

1

- What event activities or equipment could present additional or unusual hazards (for example, bouncy castles, fireworks, fairground rides, etc.)
- If there are any specific precautions required where people are setting up or breaking down the event
- If you need to complete risk assessments and prepare a safety plan, identifying what health and safety procedures, arrangements and checks will be required
- If you need to liaise with other agencies (for example, venue owner/management, the police, emergency services or local authority)
- If you need to obtain a license to run the event
- If you will need to use contractors and how you will determine if they are suitable/competent, and have adequate insurance cover
- What welfare facilities will need to be provided (for example, toilets)
- What emergency arrangements will be required (for example, in the event of an accident, fire or other emergency requiring an evacuation of the site or building).

Considering these points will help you to identify what resources, precautions, arrangements and facilities will be required for the event. If you are an employer, you must complete appropriate risk assessments. These will also help you with this.

You can then translate this information into an event safety plan if you need one.

Action

Guidance

2

Check that your insurance cover and that of others is adequate for the event.

We expect many churches to regularly run fêtes and coffee mornings, and your policy will provide cover for these. However, occasionally churches will run unusual or hazardous activities such as, firework displays, abseiling and tower tours, to name a few.

If you are planning any events like these, you should contact us as soon as you know when the event will be happening to confirm that adequate cover is in place. Where specific activities at your event are to be managed and under the control of another person or organisation, you should check that they have adequate Public Liability cover.

Where the activities are of a hazardous nature, it is essential that you check the competency of the third party provider also.

3

Check other contract arrangements.

You should carefully check any contractual agreements before entering into them. These could be with attraction providers or relate to the hiring of premises or equipment.

Some contracts may attempt to make you responsible for any damage or injury, regardless of how this was caused. Where this is the case, these should be challenged. If, for example, while you are using premises belonging to others a fire occurs, perhaps because of faulty wiring, there is no reason why you should be made responsible for the cost of repairing the building or for injuries to others. The organisation's own property and liability insurances should apply. We advise you not to sign such documents. When challenged, many organisations are willing to amend terms.

You should seek legal advice if you are in any way doubtful about your contractual obligations.

Action

Guidance

4

Plan for incidents and emergencies, so that you can respond promptly and appropriately.

You must have plans in place to respond effectively to any incident or other emergency that might occur at an event. This will reflect the level of risk presented by it and the people attending.

Most church events are modest affairs, with few risks, in static venues, having established procedures in place. Here, the normal arrangements for dealing with incidents and emergencies may be adequate. For larger or unusual events though, you may need additional arrangements and resources. You may have to develop an emergency plan if the event is very large, discussing this with the emergency services where appropriate.

Normally, you will need to include contingencies to deal with a fire, an accident, a security alert, severe weather, or the unavailability of key event staff. Usually, you will need arrangements for:

- Raising the alarm
- A safe evacuation of the premises
- Contacting the emergency services for assistance.

5

Implement your arrangements to ensure the event runs safely.

Depending on the nature of the event being held, you may need to:

- Check that all necessary precautions and arrangements are in place
- Ensure that all welfare and emergency facilities are in place
- Ensure cooperation and proper coordination between various parties (for example, contractors)
- Provide your staff, volunteers and others with relevant health and safety information
- Provide specific training for staff and volunteers.

It is a good idea to review how things went after the event has finished. This will help you identify if any improvements can be made for future events.

Action

Guidance

6

Document your arrangements and responsibilities for managing safety at events.

Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.

If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record these as part of it.

You can use our church health and safety policy template if you haven't done this and need one to comply with health and safety law.

Want to know more?

We have produced other useful information to help you get started or simply check the adequacy of what you have already done. All are available at:

www.ecclesiastical.com/healthandsafety

In particular, we have specific advice on firework and bonfire safety:

 [Firework and Bonfire Safety](#)

As well as bouncy castle safety:

 [Bouncy Castle Safety](#)

Further guidance and resources are also available at:

 [HSE Event Safety](#)

And from RoSPA at:

 [RoSPA](#)

Helpful guidance aimed at volunteers organising community events is provided by the Cabinet Office in their 'Can Do' Guide. This is available at:

 ['Can do' Guide](#)

Information in this document

We have prepared this guide in good faith. The information in it is based on our understanding of current law and practice. Neither Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc nor any of its subsidiaries accept any liability whatsoever for any errors or omissions in this guide that result in injury, loss or damage, including financial loss. It is the responsibility of the Insured or any person to ensure that they comply with their statutory obligations. Any interpretation or implementation of this guide is at the sole discretion of the reader.

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 contact us

For further information on health and safety in churches:

**Call our Risk Management Advice Line on
0345 600 7531**

(Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 17:00 – excluding Bank Holidays. We may monitor or record calls to improve our service.)

Email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

Or visit

www.ecclesiastical.com/healthandsafety



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