



Health &
Safety
Handbook
for churches
in the
Banbury
Circuit 2024

Summary of the Circuit Health and Safety Policy for local churches

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General statement of policy

The Banbury Circuit policy, so far as is reasonably practicable, is to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment and systems of work for all our, employees, casual labour and voluntary helpers, and to provide such information, training and supervision as they need for this purpose.

We will also endeavour to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all members of the congregation, contractors, visitors and others who may visit any of our churches and church surrounds.

The Church requires in turn that visitors, volunteers, members of the Church and suppliers abide by the safety rules and take responsibility for the safety of themselves and of other people.

Responsibility of members, employees and voluntary workers

All church members, employees and voluntary workers have a responsibility to cooperate in the implementation of this Health and Safety policy and to take reasonable care of themselves and others whilst on church business or premises.

Members, employees and voluntary workers must therefore:

1. Familiarise themselves with, and adhere to, safety procedures including fire alarm procedures and evacuation routes
2. Comply with safety rules, operating instructions and working procedures, and comply with the Health and Safety policies
3. Wear any protective clothing/protective equipment that may be provided as and when necessary, and report any defects through the appropriate channels
4. Immediately report any fault or defect in equipment, and all new safety and health hazards to the appropriate person
5. Report and record all accidents (however minor), injuries, near misses or other potential safety hazards as soon as possible
6. Not misuse anything provided in the interests of Health and Safety
7. Ensure that any criminal record checks that may be required for volunteers, Church employees and contractors while on Church premises, are conducted in compliance with relevant regulations
8. Ensure that any equipment that is brought in to Church premises is maintained in safe working order, and that any materials used are stored and disposed of with regard to the safety of the Church and other users
9. Make themselves familiar, under direction, with fire fighting equipment
10. Co-operate with the Church at all times on matters of safety

The responsibility of organisation leaders, and users groups

All visiting organisations and persons renting or using the premises will be provided with this summary copy of the health and safety policy and are asked to confirm that they will comply with it.

The leaders of any organisations using the premises (choirs, uniformed groups, etc.) are responsible for Health and Safety regarding the activities of their organisations, and should have appropriate Policies and Risk Assessments in place.

The renter of premises is responsible for the Health and Safety of those present during their use of the premises.

The responsibilities of visitors to the Church

All visiting organisations and persons renting or using the premises will be provided with this summary copy of the health and safety policy, and are asked to confirm that they will comply with it.

Visitors should:

1. Read and adhere to any safety procedures displayed in public areas, including fire alarm procedures and evacuation routes
2. Wear any protective clothing/protective equipment that may be provided as and when necessary, and report any defects in such
3. Co-operate with the Church at all times on matters of safety.

Implementation of the Policy

This section sets out the arrangements to minimise as far as is reasonably practicable, risks to the Health and Safety of employees, voluntary workers, members of the congregation, visitors and contractors.

Accidents and first aid.

First aid boxes are located in prominently in each building. The accident recording books are similarly prominently displayed in each location.

All accidents and incidents should be entered in the accident book. If the accident results in injury or damage to the property, then the church's Insurance Company will be informed.

In the event of an accident all people using our premises, and all outside organisations, must enter details in the accident book.

Fire extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are kept prominently displayed throughout the premises, as are fire blankets. These are normally located near exits and kitchen, and other high risk areas.

Please follow instruction on each fire extinguisher

Fire alarm system

Where fire alarms are fitted:

a random alarm exercise will be undertaken twice a year.

If the alarm is activated evacuate the building in a calm and orderly fashion following the evacuation procedures below.

Procedures in the event of fire

If you discover a fire (no matter how small):

1. Immediately raise the alarm
 2. Telephone the emergency services
 3. Check the building for occupants and advise any found to evacuate the premises
 4. Attack the fire if possible, and within your capability, using the appliances provided, but without taking personal risk
 5. If it is not possible to attack the fire or if you are unsure which fire extinguisher to use, assist in the evacuation of the building, ensuring that all doors and windows are closed behind you.
 6. **The rule is to put the safety of people before that of property**
 7. Evacuate to the designated assembly point
 8. Ensure clear external access for the emergency vehicles
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Emergency evacuation procedures

For services and concerts where there is a large congregation or audience, the procedures for stewarding and evacuation are as follows:

1. All designated fire doors must be unlocked before the service/event commences and be clearly marked as fire exits by illuminating the 'Running Man' symbol emergency exit signs

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2. A check must be made that all doors can be opened
3. Follow any instructions given by a Steward
4. In the event of an emergency (fire/bomb threat, etc.), an announcement to leave the building must be made by a Steward or Group Leader
5. Persons will assemble at the nearest assembly point (for Marlborough Road, this is outside the library)
6. The emergency services must be contacted immediately by any person using any available telephone

Event organisers are responsible for implementing these procedures as a precondition of their use of the premises.

Personal safety

Working alone

Lone attendance on the premises should be avoided, except under agreed circumstances. Persons must not work on their own unless they have a means of communication, and have notified a colleague of the details of the work being undertaken and agreed a procedure to ensure their safety is checked on.

Working at high levels

The following areas are designated as high levels:

any space higher than 3 metres from floor level

Only the following persons may work at high level within the church buildings: approved contractors, named individuals.

Approval of the Church Council is required before start of work, and a schedule and plan of the work (with details of appropriate equipment and manpower levels) must be provided prior to approval.

A minimum of two people should be present at all times.

Appropriate equipment must be used, for example, tower scaffolding, library ladders, and long ladders.

Roofs

No one may access these areas except in the company of a qualified contractor, nor without the approval of the Property Steward. A schedule and plan of the work (with details of appropriate equipment and manpower levels) must be provided before starting the work.

Working below ground level

Church basements tend to be difficult to access.

Working alone is not permitted in these areas, two people should be present when accessing such areas.

Preparation of food and care of kitchens

Food Hygiene Regulations are applicable to all food and drinks consumed on the premises. The only exception is for food cooked at home for private consumption.

Each group renting or using the church premises should be familiar with basic food preparation hygiene and safety procedures as a pre-condition of use.

They must ensure that the appropriate assessment of risks is carried out for the foods to be prepared and stored, including storage at the correct temperatures.

Before any preparation commences all surfaces coming into contact with food must be washed down and disinfected

Foodstuffs may only be prepared in church kitchens:

Separate hand washing and food preparation sinks are required if food to be prepared in any other room.

All hirers who prepare food are responsible for maintaining appropriate standards.

Manual handling – lifting, carrying and moving loads

No person should be required to move heavy items beyond their capability.

Chairs and tables should be moved individually, unless a chair trolley or table trolley is used.

Church furniture

During services or other public events, the church chairs must be linked in rows of no more than eight chairs. Adequate aisles or passageways between the chairs must be maintained at the centre and both sides of the church.

These should be wide enough to allow the passage of at least two persons comfortably side by side. Similar passageways must be maintained to the fire exits of the church.

Chairs should be stacked away in stacks of no more than six.

Folding tables should be stored carefully to ensure they will not fall over.

Any chairs (or tables) which have bent or loose legs should be discarded immediately.

Floors

If floors are to be washed or polished, adequate notices must be displayed making this clear.

No trailing leads or other obstructions should be on the floor unless clearly marked or properly protected.

Any spillages of liquid must be cleared away immediately.

Use of candles

If candles are to be used, they must be placed in proper static candleholders or sand trays, and be placed away from any combustible materials - particularly curtains and other hanging fabrics. Candles must only be alight whilst the premises are occupied.

Fire blankets and/or small spray bottles of water should be provided to dampen down any flames.

Christingle services or similar where candles are held by individuals require a separate risk assessment, stewards should be appointed to observe an area.

Any variation of this requires a separate risk assessment.

Hanging items

Any items to be hung from walls or ceilings must be secured by appropriate fixings that have been approved by the church Property Committee or Church Council. Such fixings must be adequate for the item being hung and there must be no danger of the item falling.

Child protection

Our policy on child protection issues is set out in the current Safeguarding Policy of the Methodist Church, which are displayed on internal notice boards.

Details of the numbers and ages of all young people involved in each group and details of adult supervisors must be maintained.

Parental consent forms should be obtained for trips away from the church, and any particular needs of individual children noted.

Vulnerable people

Our procedures conform to the Safeguarding Policies recommended by the Methodist Church which are displayed on internal notice boards. All adults who have contact with children and vulnerable people are required to undergo Safeguarding Training from the Methodist Church, and to be CRB checked.

Electrical Items

Churches are required to have electrical items (e.g.: electric kettles, portable heaters etc) PAT tested regularly. Electrical items used by external groups should have a PAT certification sticker before they are brought on to the premises and plugged in.

Contractors

Anyone entering church premises for the purposes of carrying out work, other than an employee or voluntary worker of the church, will be regarded as a contractor.

All contractors are advised that they enter and carry out work on the premises at their own risk.

Any contractors carrying out work on the premises will be provided with this summary copy of the Health and Safety Policy and are asked to confirm they will abide by it.

All contractors, including the self-employed, must abide by the following:

1. Have their own Health and Safety policy (where required by law) and be able to provide a copy of it
2. Produce evidence that they have appropriate Public and Employers' Liability insurance in place. A record of this evidence will be maintained.
3. Comply with all the requirements of this Health and Safety policy and cooperate with the church officials in providing a safe place of work and a safe system of operation.
4. Where plant and machinery is brought onto the church premises by contractors, they must be able to show where necessary that the equipment has been inspected and tested to ensure its safe operation.
5. Contractors may only use sub-contractors or persons other than their own direct employees with the express permission of the church officials. However, responsibility will remain with the contractors.
6. All contractors will be given detailed instructions regarding the areas where they are permitted to work and the extent of the work they are authorised to undertake. This 'permit to work' will also specify any safety precautions they must undertake.

Particular care needs to be taken for 'hot works' and a separate hot work permit is available from Methodist Insurance.

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