

Church Worship/Religious Meetings

INTRODUCTION

The Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1989 allocated premises where church worship or religious meetings take place to local authorities. This general guidance should be of use to all persons involved in the running of a church, although it is not intended to cover all possible circumstances that may be encountered.

Detailed advice can always be obtained from your local Environmental Health Department.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

S.2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. (HSW) Act 1974 specifies the general duties of employers to their employees. It will apply only in cases where there is **employment** of persons at the place(s) of worship. In general terms it requires: the provision of safe plant and systems of work; safe use, handling, storage of articles & substances; information, instruction, training and supervision; a safe place of work and a safe working environment.

S.3 of HSW requires employers and self-employed persons to conduct their undertaking in a manner that is safe with regard to non-employees.

S.4 of HSW imposes duties on people who have control, to any extent, of non-domestic premises that are made available to non-employees as a place of work or as a place where they may use plant or substances provided for their use there.

The Inspection of Churches Measure 1995 (Ecclesiastical Law) lays down a mandatory system for the inspection of all Church of England churches by an architect approved by the diocesan committee every 5 years. A competent inspection with remedial action taken where necessary should assist each church in meeting the requirements of the HSW Act.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Churchyard: safe access throughout; safe equipment for maintenance; a safe excavation method must be employed.
2. Main church: adequate lighting; absence of tripping & slipping hazards; suitable fire precautions; safety of the fixed electrical system and any portable electrical appliances; safe heating systems.
3. Tower: access restricted to authorised persons and to be lockable; safety of access and adequate lighting; security of ladders etc; padding and signage in areas of low headroom; safe systems & procedures re: bell ringing; belfry to be adequately lit & warning notice(s) to be in position when occupied; restricted access to roof; guarding of any clock weight wells.

4. Boiler room: lockable access; good housekeeping; no storage of flammable materials; appropriate safety devices to boiler; possibility of presence of asbestos insulation.

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

1. A guide to church inspection and repair (CCC)
(Church House Publishing, Dean's Yard, London, SW1P 3NZ).
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