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1. Safety (and health, including smoking in public buildings)

General guidance

Insurer **EIG** have produced a 9-page model document to get PCCs started. It begins with a general statement of policy to all employees, voluntary helpers, and contractors, then addressing responsibilities. It covers issues of first aid, fire, electrical and gas safety, hazardous substances, plant and machinery, slipping, tripping and falling hazards, lighting, working at heights, food preparation, lifting and moving, hazardous buildings or glazing, and on-site contractors. It doesn't deal with security from personal attack.



Copies can be had from EIG (01452-528533; marketing@EIGmail.com; www.eigonline.co.uk/).

You may also want to see a similar document, downloadable from www.churchsafety.org.uk and also accessible via a link from www.churchcare.co.uk (the site created in 2001 by the Archbishops' Council and supported by EIG, offering a one-stop-shop regarding church maintenance, fund-raising, and security, and links to many other useful sites).

Health & Safety Policy Statement and Risk Assessment

Insurer EIG also offers their consultants and surveyors for local seminars, to give guidance on how to tailor these generic documents to your local situations and needs. In general, each PCC/DCC should appoint a H&S subcommittee and record one member as having specific responsibility for H&S. That group could then work through the self-assessment form "How safe is your Church and Church Hall?" in EIG's Guidance Notes for Churches, Section 3: Health & Safety.

Do remember that places of worship are not exempt from H&S legislation. Environmental Health Officers enforce it in places of worship under Health & Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998, since the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (Section 4(2)) imposes a duty on persons who have control of premises to ensure that the premises, means of access, and any plant or substance in the premises, are safe and without risk to health. From May-04, these duties extend to the handling of asbestos and management of risks from it [see separate section].

Smoke-free public premises

The Health Act (2006) creates offences of smoking in a public place, and of failing to prevent that happening. So, persons who control (or are concerned with the management of) those premises must stop any person who is smoking there from doing so. Many church premises, and certainly all places of worship, always have been smoke-free. However, churches may have control over

places such as halls, and smoking in them must now be prevented. Those persons must also ensure that compliant [no-smoking signs](#) are displayed. Enforcement will be up to local authorities, which the Department of Health are encouraging to employ a light touch.

Incense burned in churches is unlikely to be interpreted within the definitions in s1(2) of the Act (which are of lit tobacco).

Security of church premises

www.nationalchurchwatch.co.uk gives advice on physical security for places of worship, as well as personal safety, crime statistics and more.

Further information

[Insurer EIG](#) suggest the "Churchwardens' Handbook - A Practical Guide" [£7.99; ISBN 184003534X], by former archdeacon, Ian Russell. They also recommend "Practical Church Management - A Guide for Every Parish" [£15.99; ISBN 0852444710], a comprehensive handbook covering all aspects of the church, including its people, life, property and finance. It is written by diocesan chancellor James Behrens. Either can be had from Church House Bookshop (020-7898 1306; www.chbookshop.co.uk).

2. Fire Safety Regulations in Places of Worship

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 a "responsible person", which can be the PCC, must carry out a risk assessment of their premises and have thought about how to ensure evacuation.

Risk assessment, and whether you need to plan escape routes or have fire-detection/fighting equipment, is explained at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/firesafetyrisk7.

A brief guide on making fire-safety improvements can be found at [here](#). Also, insurer EIG offers [guidance](#), and a [risk assessment form](#).

Further guidance on regulations, including action points for those responsible for "employees" (paid or not) who use or pass through any part of the church building (shop, office, worship spaces) on their way to/from work, can be had free from www.wmfs.net.

The [Fire Service \(FS\)](#) may still be the best interpreter of requirements, and they may still be willing to visit to advise on needs for emergency lighting, signage, etc., which are certainly not mandatory.

Other church Guidance Notes are also available from EIG (08457-773322; churches@EIGmail.com; <http://www.ecclesiastical.com/ourproducts/insurance/churchinsurance/index.aspx>).



3. Risks from asbestos in churches

Background

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 (as amended) have been replaced by The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002.

Duties of churches

The new Regulations' principal feature is the duty to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises and this includes churches. Since 2004, those having control of non-domestic premises have a duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of whether asbestos is, or is liable to be, present.



In making the assessment, this "dutyholder" must:

- take steps that are reasonable in the circumstances;
- consider the condition of any asbestos which is, or is assumed, present in the premises;
- take account of building plans and of relevant information, and the age of the premises;
- inspect (or have inspected) parts of the premises which are reasonably accessible;
- review the assessment if there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid, or the building is altered.

Where the assessment shows that asbestos is present, or is liable to be, the "dutyholder" must:

- determine the risk from that asbestos;
- prepare a written plan, to identify the parts of the premises concerned;
- prepare measures for managing the risk;
- ensure that measures specified in the plan shall be adequate for monitoring condition, guaranteeing proper maintenance or removal, and ensure that information about the location and condition of asbestos is provided to every person liable to disturb it, and to the emergency services;
- record the measures taken to implement the plan, and review it at regular intervals.

Likelihood of risk

The vast majority of CofE churches were either constructed or restored before asbestos was used in construction, so the overall risk will not be as high as for other classes of building. However, some churches contain asbestos, perhaps in connection with twentieth-century extensions or alterations; heating systems, pipe lagging, organ blowers, or roofing materials. A number may contain significant asbestos. It's hence important that the response matches the risk.

Who should undertake the survey?

Each diocese will have to establish a diocesan-wide approach, to identify all non-domestic premises under Church control and to ensure that inspection is implemented and any necessary

follow-up action taken. Some dioceses have commissioned a firm to survey all premises; others are considering linking the matter initially with quinquennial inspection, or otherwise ensuring appropriate action is taken locally. (Parishes could enlist a local person, perhaps a member of the congregation with knowledge of building materials, to study the published material and undertake the exercise: the published guidance suggests that expert asbestos surveys of all buildings are not necessary).

In the first instance, seek your insurer's advice and consider what is said at the Asbestos Watchdog website. Where action in response to the Regulations is taken, those making the assessment should study the published advice, and have in mind when surveying the building issues such as (i) its overall age, (ii) dates of building programmes, (iii) when services were installed, and (iv) information available from the QI report. Some building materials such as glass, bricks and stone do not contain asbestos. However, materials used in the twentieth century may well contain asbestos, and an assumption must be made that materials do contain asbestos unless there is evidence to suggest they do not. The assessment should therefore:

- find asbestos on the premises, or materials assumed to contain asbestos.
- record where it is and its condition.
- assess the potential risk.
- decide what to do, depending on the condition of the materials and take appropriate action.
- decide whether any professional involvement is necessary: if significant asbestos is found or assumed to be present, it might be appropriate to seek a specialist survey;
- record action in the Church Log Book.

Where information on asbestos is available from an existing QI report, the CCC suggest that the action plan is reviewed when subsequent reports are received. It will be necessary for appropriate instructions on the survey of asbestos to be given to the architect/surveyor, since the survey of asbestos is not at present covered in the diocesan booklet available from the "Looking After Your Church" part of the website.

Appropriate professional help should be brought in where necessary, particularly where maintenance or refurbishment of the premises is being planned. The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) has developed an accreditation scheme for organisations that carry out asbestos surveys, and the [Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors](#) and the [Asbestos Removal Contractors Association](#) (ARCA [01283-531126]) are jointly setting up a scheme. The British Occupational Hygiene Society is developing an [Asbestos Building Inspectors Certification Scheme](#) (ABICS) for individuals undertaking such surveys.

Further advice

General information on asbestos can be had from the [Health and Safety Executive](#). From HSE Books (01787-881165) can be bought "A comprehensive guide to managing asbestos in premises" (HSG227), £12.50; and "The management of asbestos in non-domestic premises [Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L127)]", £9.50.

This guidance came from the [Council for the Care of Churches](#) (Aug-03)

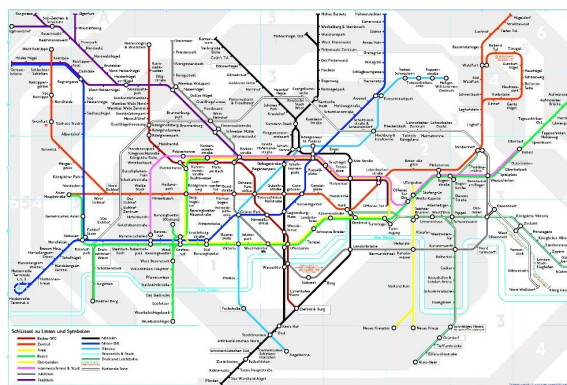
As mentioned above, [insurer EIG](#) had by 2004 published advice.

Counterarguments, against wholesale overreaction, can be read at [Asbestos Watchdog](#).

4. Electrical wiring in churches

Despite increasingly high standards of installation, numerous church fires can be attributed to faulty electric wiring or apparatus.

It is therefore important that electricity should be treated with respect, and we would recommend that a 100mA/100ms Residual Current Device be fitted between the meter and the main distribution board.



General

All electric wiring should be installed in accordance with the [Regulations for Electrical Installations issued by the Institution of Electrical Engineers \(IEE\), Current Edition, under British Standard BS7671 and subsequent amendment.](#)

Work on the electrical system/installation in churches should be undertaken only by electrical contractors enrolled with the [National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting \(NICEIC\)](#), or the [Electrical Contractors Association \(ECA\)](#), or the [National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers \(NAPIT\)](#).

However, you should note that the [NICEIC](#) carries out periodical and random inspections of contractors' work; the contractor would be liable for any remedial work required to repair faulty work.

Inspection and Testing

The [Council for the Care of Churches](#) recommends that churches have their electrical installations inspected and tested every five years. The inspection and testing should be carried out in accordance with [IEE Regulations](#), Nos. 712 and 713, and an inspection certificate obtained in every case.

The main switchgear in the church should be labelled to show:

- the date of the most recent inspection, and
- the date of the recommended future inspection.
- Subsequent MCBs/fuses should be labelled to show the circuit supplied.

The Church Authorities should ensure that a thorough physical examination of all portable appliances is conducted regularly to ensure that worn flexes, broken plugs or sockets etc. are replaced immediately.

The Health and Safety Executive publication "[Maintaining portable electrical equipment in offices and other low-risk environments](#)", Ref. INDG236 4/04, gives guidance on how and when inspections should be carried out.

5. Telecomms aerials/masts

Links to issues of safety regarding these installations in church buildings (including contact details of PCCs which have them or have considered them), can be found in article www.birmingham.anglican.org/upload/pdf/ChurchBuildingTipsheets.pdf.