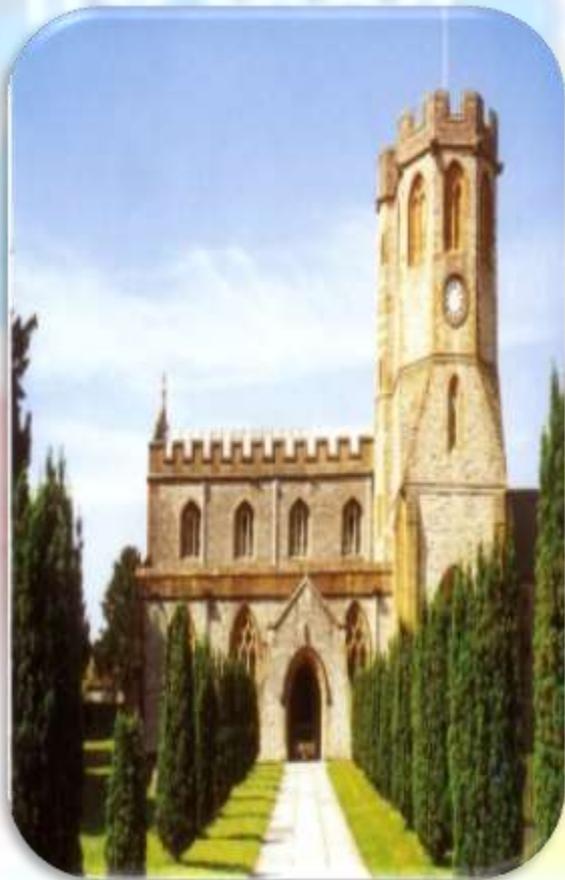




Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

# A GUIDE TO HEALTH AND SAFETY IN CHURCHES, CHURCH HALLS AND OTHER PLACES OF WORSHIP



**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**FERMANAGH & OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## INTRODUCTION

Under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 you are required to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health and safety of yourself, employees (including volunteers) and non-employees (i.e. the public, contractors etc.) who may be affected by the activities carried out on your premises.

Health and safety has become an increasingly important part of everyday life and should be given due consideration in the management of Churches, Church halls etc.

This booklet is intended to explain the main legal health and safety requirements that apply to church buildings.

## Legal Requirements

### HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Under Article 4 (3) of the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 Employers are required to produce a Health and Safety Policy statement that expresses the company's commitment to Health and Safety, which should be supported by top management. It is a legal requirement for employers to have a written Health and Safety Policy document if they employ five or more employees (including full/part-time, casual or voluntary employees).

A Safety Policy must be provided for employees and should consist of three parts:-

1. A statement of intent of the company towards the health and safety of employees
2. A description of the organisation of the company indicating health and safety responsibility
3. The arrangements for securing the health and safety of employees

The Health and Safety Policy '**statement of intent**' should be brought to the attention of

all your employees by displaying it on a notice board where it can be easily seen and read.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY POSTER

If you employ anyone you must display the Health and Safety Executive's Health and Safety Law Poster or provide each of your employees with the equivalent leaflet as stated under the Health and Safety (Information for Employees) Regulations (NI) 1991. The poster must be displayed somewhere it is accessible to all employees and is easily read, for example the staff notice board.

To purchase the poster please contact HSE Books by telephone or email:

- phone: 0333 202 5070
- email: [hseorders@tso.co.uk](mailto:hseorders@tso.co.uk)



## ACCIDENT REPORTING

Under the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1997 (RIDDOR) if there is an accident connected with work and:

- an employee or a self employed person working on your premises is killed or suffers a major injury; or

- a member of the public is killed or is taken to hospital

You are required to report this to the enforcing authority. In your case this is Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.

Reportable accidents and incidents include deaths, major injuries such as fractures, amputations, dislocations, loss of sight and accidents which resulted in employees taking more than three days off work.

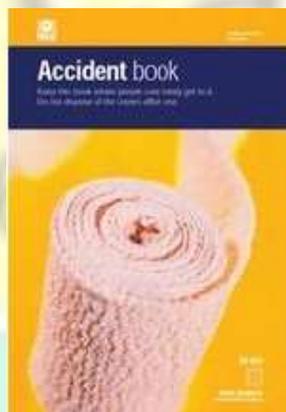
You are required to contact your enforcing authority without delay. This can be done online by completing the NI2508 form and posting it to the Council or by telephoning the Environmental Health Department in Fermanagh & Omagh District Council directly on 0300 3031777. You have the option to report all work-related incidents to HSENI regardless of who the relevant enforcing authority is for the business. HSENI will process all forms onto its RIDDOR database and where applicable, forward on to the appropriate local council to register and process in the normal way.

Email: [mail@hseni.gov.uk](mailto:mail@hseni.gov.uk)

Phone: 0800 0320 121

## ACCIDENT BOOK

You must keep an accurate record of accidents on your premises the easiest way to do this is using an 'Accident Book'. The records must include the date, time and location of the accident personal details of those involved a brief description of the nature of the event and a signature of the person making the entry.



## FIRST AID

Employers are required to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable first aid to be given to employees/public if they are injured or become ill on your premises.



An appointed person is required to take charge of first-aid arrangements. A suitably stocked first-aid box should include sterile plasters/eye pads, triangular bandages, safety pins, unmedicated large/small wound dressings (sterile), disposable gloves etc. Tablets should not be kept in a first aid box to treat any injury onsite.

## RISK ASSESSMENTS

Under The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 employers are legally required to assess all the risks associated with their work and activities taking place on their premises.

Risk assessments should be carried out by a competent person who must consider everyone who can be affected by that activity, for example employees, volunteers, temporary workers, contractors or the public. Risk assessments are required to be documented where there are more than five people employed. Significant findings should be communicated to all persons who could be affected by the hazard.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record your findings and implement them
5. Review your assessment and update if necessary

It is recommended to approach a risk assessment as follows - look around your building to assess the hazards that are most likely to cause someone harm paying particular attention to hazards that could affect a significant number of people. Also remembering to take into consideration the activities that take place on your premises and the risk that are associated with them (this could be quite extensive for premises such as church halls).

Consulting others, such as grounds men is important as they may be aware of hazards that are not immediately obvious. For your convenience at the end of this booklet you will find a Risk Assessment template

### APPOINTED HEALTH AND SAFETY PERSON

It is strongly recommended that every church appoints a member with the specific responsibility for health and safety. This person would have the responsibility of carry out the risk assessments and implementing the required control measures. Significant findings should be communicated to management.



### Risk Assessment:

#### Fire safety

##### Main hazards

1. Faults in electrical wiring
2. Poorly maintained appliances e.g. electric space heaters
3. Candles
4. Cooking equipment
5. Storage of flammable materials e.g. gas cylinders, cleaning chemicals

##### Managing the risk

- All electrical equipment should be subject to regular maintenance, and all faults reported/repaired immediately.
- Do not leave cooking equipment unattended.
- Candles should be housed in proper holders.
- Fire alarms properly installed and maintained.
- Flammable materials are stored in appropriate containers.
- Fire fighting equipment is provided (it is recommended to be checked every 12 months)
- Means of escape are maintained and free from obstructions.
- Evacuation procedures are in place/documented
- A fire risk assessment should be carried out – for further guidance contact the Fire Authority.



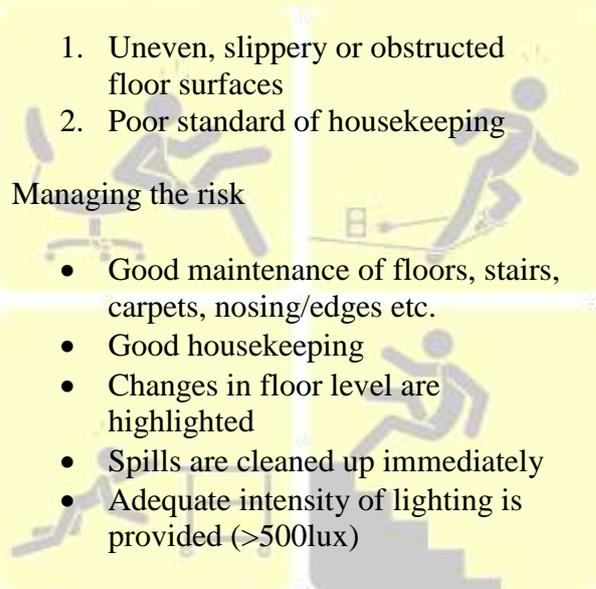
### Slips, trips and falls

##### Main hazards

1. Uneven, slippery or obstructed floor surfaces
2. Poor standard of housekeeping

##### Managing the risk

- Good maintenance of floors, stairs, carpets, nosing/edges etc.
- Good housekeeping
- Changes in floor level are highlighted
- Spills are cleaned up immediately
- Adequate intensity of lighting is provided (>500lux)



## General access/egress

### Main hazards

- Entrances/exits to church buildings (including condition of steps/ramps)

### Managing the risk

- Mark/highlight steps
- Provide handrails if necessary
- Restrict access where appropriate e.g. bell tower, boiler room.
- Regular maintenance of entrances/exits to ensure they are secure/safe.

## Working at height

### Main hazards

1. Changing light bulbs on high ceilings
2. Decorating your premises
3. Dressing your premises for special events e.g. weddings

### Managing the risk

- Safe use of ladders, ensure the ladder is suitable for the task and there is no visible damage to the ladder, it is only used on flat ground, no overreaching/stretching or carrying bulky loads up and down the ladder.
- Provision of suitable platforms where possible.
- Use reputable contractors when required i.e. to complete jobs that are unsafe for you to do or require specialist equipment.

## Staircases/balconies

### Main hazards

1. Falling from height due to insufficient edge protection.



### Managing the risk

- Restricted access
- Provide secure handrails and adequate edge protection.
- Close supervision of children.

## Lone working

### Main hazards

1. Groundsmen, cleaners etc.

### Managing the risk

- Provide emergency alert checks, e.g. phone in system, task and finish alerts etc.
- Provide suitable equipment and any Personal Protective Equipment required to carry out their duties.
- Assess individual's fitness and competence to carry out such work.

## Electrical safety

### Main hazards

1. Fixed electrical installations
2. Portable appliances e.g. heaters.

Managing the risk.

- Fixed electrical installations (e.g. fuse board sockets) should be checked by a competent electrician every 5 years.
- You should carry out regular visual checks on all portable appliances including plugs, cables, fuses etc.
- Outdoor electrical equipment should be supplied through a circuit protected by a 30mA residual current device (RCD).



## Grounds maintenance

### Main hazards

1. Grass cutting, hedge trimming, and general upkeep.
2. Pesticide use

### Managing the risk

- Provide suitable and well maintained equipment for each task.
- Provide protective equipment (e.g. goggles, gloves, appropriate footwear etc.)
- Only use approved pesticides
- Obtain the safety information data sheet from your supplier for all hazardous chemicals used.



## Graveyards

### Main hazards

1. Grave digging
2. Headstone stability

### Managing the risk

- Open graves are never left



unattended/uncovered.

- A safe system of work for grave digging is implemented
- Suitable grave digging equipment is provided.
- Routine checks/maintenance is carried out for the graveyard.

## Manual handling

### Main hazards

1. Moving/handling heavy loads e.g. chair stacks

### Managing the risk

- Avoid manual handling where possible
- Consider a two man lift when lifting heavy items.
- Provide mechanical aids (e.g. trolleys) where required.
- Proper lifting technique

The following rules should be observed:

1. Stand close to the load
2. Keep your feet shoulder width apart, bend your knees and keep your back straight
3. Grasp the load firmly
4. Lift with your legs and not with your back, keep the heaviest side of the load next to your body and avoid twisting the back.
5. Never lift a load that is too heavy – go for help.

## Violence/Personal Security

### Main hazards

1. Robbery of goods or money may place persons at risk from violence.

### Managing the risk

- Avoid lone working
- Consider security measures for your safety
- Avoid storing large amounts of money onsite.
- Vary your routine when making lodgement trips to the bank.

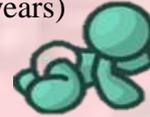


- Ensure markings and spaces are clearly defined in car parks
- Directional arrows and illustrated signage is provided.

## Young/vulnerable persons

### Main hazards

1. Youth groups
2. Child care (under 5 years)
3. Sunday school



### Managing the risk

- Provide a safe and secure premises suitable for the required activities
- Provide suitable equipment and maintain all equipment.
- Provide adequate supervision
- Provide training for supervisors.
- When managing the risks for young children you must take into consideration their immaturity, lack of experience and awareness of the risks.

## Burns/scalds

### Main hazards

1. Catering activities – contact with hot surfaces/steam etc.
2. Burns from central heating systems – (e.g. pipe work, and radiators)

### Managing the risk

- Regular maintenance of heating systems and provide a thermostat
- Provide guards for radiators e.g. nurseries/crèche
- Restrict access to kitchen facilities
- Train all users in the safe use of catering equipment.



## Use of vehicles

### Main hazards

1. Vehicles used for outings e.g. minibuses
2. Vehicle movement around buildings and in the car park.

### Managing the risk

- Regular maintenance of vehicles
- Assess competence of drivers and ensure you only allow competent drivers
- Consider use of seat belts for all passengers
- Erect speed limit signs in car parks

## Use of chemicals

### Main hazards

1. Use of cleaning materials
2. Solvents/paints
3. Pesticides, weed killers, insecticides and fertilisers.
4. Petrol, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)

### Managing the risk

- Substitute dangerous substances for less hazardous alternatives where possible
- Use and store hazardous substances in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Carry out an assessment of hazardous chemicals used on the premises (i.e. chemicals labelled toxic, harmful, irritant, corrosive etc.) Obtain chemical safety data sheets from your supplier for each hazardous substance you use on your premises. From these safety data sheets you will be able to identify the more dangerous chemicals and take reasonable steps to reduce employee exposure.
- Provide suitable protective equipment when required (e.g. gloves, goggles etc.)
- Use professional contractors where possible.



## Office area

### Main hazards

1. Prolonged use of visual display units may cause eyestrain and muscular fatigue
2. Slips trips and falls
3. Manual handling

### Managing the risk

- Assess individual workstation, assessing lighting, layout etc.
- Provide staff with relevant information, instruction and training
- Maintain a good standard of housekeeping
- Provide adequate ventilation and intensity of lighting.

## Asbestos

### Main hazards

1. Disturbing Asbestos materials releases dangerous fibres which if breathed in can cause serious diseases. Asbestos was extensively used as a building material in the 1950s through to the mid 1980s.
2. Anyone who works on the fabric of the building may be at risk of disturbing asbestos (e.g. electricians, joiners, plumbers, gas fitters, plasters, general maintenance engineers etc.)



### Managing the risk

- Avoid working with asbestos if possible.

- Carry out an asbestos assessment to find out if asbestos is present in any of your church buildings.
- If asbestos is in good condition and not likely to be disturbed it is usually safer to leave it in place and manage it appropriately. Removal may be unnecessary and costly. However if removal is required this work must be carried out by a licensed contractor under the Control of Asbestos Regulations (NI) 2012. The Health and Safety Executive (NI) is the licensing authority under these Regulations.

Information on licensed asbestos removal contractors is available from:

Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland,  
83 Ladas Drive,  
Belfast,  
BT6 9FR

Phone: 0800 0320 121

### Smoke free legislation

From April 2007 it has been against the law to smoke in 'enclosed' and 'substantially enclosed' workplaces and public places. The law requires those responsible for smoke-free premises to prevent or stop a person smoking within their premises. You are also required to display no-smoking signs so that they are clearly visible to all employees, customers and visitors. Free no-smoking signage can be downloaded from the following website [www.spacetobreathe.org.uk](http://www.spacetobreathe.org.uk). For example if a church hall is used for other activities such as bingo, playgroups, funerals etc, all patrons must exit the building to have a cigarette.



### Useful contacts

#### Environmental Health Department

Townhall, 2 Townhall Street  
Enniskillen Co Fermanagh  
BT74 7BA

The Grange, Mountjoy Road,  
Lisnamallard, Omagh, Co Tyrone  
BT79 7BL

Tel: 0300 303 1777

e-mail: [eh@fermanaghomagh.com](mailto:eh@fermanaghomagh.com)

[www.fermanaghomagh.com](http://www.fermanaghomagh.com)

#### Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (Omagh Office)

Boaz House  
19 Scarffes Entry  
Omagh  
BT78 1JG

Tel: 028 9024 3249

Email: [mail@hseni.gov.uk](mailto:mail@hseni.gov.uk)

#### General Fire Safety and Fire Risk Assessment Advice

For further advice you should contact your local Fire Authority.

#### The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Equality House  
7-9 Shaftsbury Square  
Belfast  
BT2 7DP  
Tel: (028) 9050 0589

#### Disability Action Head Office

Portside Business Park,  
189 Airport Road West, Belfast,  
BT3 9ED  
Tel: (028) 9029 7880  
Textphone: (028) 9028 7882  
Email: [hq@disabilityaction.org](mailto:hq@disabilityaction.org)

