

Managing Hazards

Risk Management and Insurance
Manual for Faith Organisations



03

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Managing Hazards

A hazard is anything that could cause injury, illness or damage.

These can be obvious – working at heights, faulty machinery and slippery surfaces. They can be the result of overlooking a risk – injury from motor vehicles, poor housekeeping, uneven surfaces, badly maintained tools or working in a confined space.

This section will help you manage those hazards and as a result, make your Church a safer place for you, your congregation and visitors.

General Hazard Management

The simplest way to manage hazards is to adopt the AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 risk management principles and guidelines.

- identify and list all the hazards in the Church and on the property
- assess the risk from each particular hazard
- prioritise the list – the first ones you should deal with are those most likely to cause a problem and those most likely to have major consequences
- look at ways to control the identified hazards
 - seek professional help if necessary
- put control measures in place to reduce the risk – the *Hierarchy of Controls (Attachment J)* is well worth looking at
- monitor and review risk treatment options to determine whether alternative measures may be more effective

To help you identify physical hazards, use the *Hazard Identification List (Attachment B)*. Your Church may also find it helpful to use an *Annual Hazard Review Form (Attachment C)*.

Manual Handling Hazards

Manual handling is any activity that requires physical effort. This includes lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, restraining moving or holding.

Assessing manual handling hazards in a Church environment

There is a risk in any physical activity.

The best way to start managing any hazard is recognizing the risk. This can be as simple as looking at any task that involves manual handling – and working out how best to reduce the risk of damage or injury.

Take lifting for example. Identify the most difficult lifting tasks performed at the Church. Consider the type of load, how much it weighs, the area involved – is the floor slippery, is it in a confined space etc – how fit is the person doing the lifting. Then consider your options. Can you arrange help? Would a trolley or a mechanical lift help? Can it be stored somewhere else?

How to handle common hazards



Lifting and handling

Lifting and handling should be approached with care. Some simple planning can help you avoid sprains, long term injury and damage to your Church.

How heavy is it?

If in doubt, mechanical assistance such as trolleys, conveyors, cranes or jacks can help. Maybe a team of people is required. It's often better to wait to do it safely, than to go ahead and injure yourself on your own.

Is it an awkward shape?

If it's an odd shape or heavy, ask yourself if it absolutely has to go where you plan – and if there is an easier way to get it there.

How many times will you move it?

Forward planning can help you avoid double handling.

Does it need a handle?

Sometimes a simple change can make handling easier. This can include adding handles, providing grips or putting things in smaller packages.

Can you redesign the workplace?

Would higher benches eliminate bending?

Would shelving make it easier to store heavy items?

Posture when performing lifting tasks

Awkward posture results in muscle fatigue. When lifting, this can result in sprains, ruptures and broken bones. Make sure the person doing the lifting knows the posture they need to use and make sure there is plenty of room.

More information on lifting techniques is available from your local WorkCover Authority.

Where people sit at workstations, see that the workstations are well designed with often-used items kept close to the body. Job rotation can also help rest muscles.

Repetitive handling

This is usually more of an issue for industrial workplaces than for Churches. But it's worth noting. Injury can occur from simple repetitive tasks like stacking chairs. It is best to get a number of people to help. If it takes a while, take regular breaks.

Manual handling information and a Manual Handling Code of Practice is available from the WorkCover Authority in your state.

Storage methods

The right storage makes manual handling easier, and safer.

Some key considerations are:

- make sure storage areas are designed to minimise the amount of lifting and shifting
- use adjustable shelving – it's the most effective way of using space
- keep small items on hooks and pegs or in containers
- avoid storage over head height
- store frequently used items between chest and hip level
- store light and rarely used objects at shoulder height
- reduce the need for storage by purchasing items in small quantities where possible
- don't store items on the floor or in walkways
- make sure combustible materials are kept well away from:
 - sprinkler heads
 - fire extinguishers
 - hose reels
 - lighting/sources of heat

Working at Heights



As a rule, the ground is a worker's best friend.

Working at heights can present a risk to health and safety in any workplace. Work that exposes anyone to the risk of falling is a serious hazard that needs to be managed.

Here are some simple questions that may make the work easier.

Is it necessary?

Can the work be avoided?

Can all or part of the work be completed on the ground?

Would it be better to use a professional contractor?

What safety precautions do you need to use?

It's important to know that each state has different legislation covering height work. Before commencing any height work, check the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) regulations in your state. These will give precise guidelines for the use of working platforms, work harnesses and other devices. Our Risk Services Team can also let you know the regulations applicable for your Church.

Working on roofs

Working on roofs can be extremely dangerous. Any fall can cause serious injury. If your roof is made of fragile materials, like asbestos cement, it may require special handling and signage to warn of the dangers involved. It's best to only use experienced and licensed professionals for any roof work.

Using ladders

Ladders make simple jobs easier – from changing light globes to cleaning gutters. Common sense is your best guide when using ladders or other work platforms.

If you do need to use a ladder, please ensure:

- you use the right sort of ladder for the job – it's strong enough and long enough
- only small, light loads (of tools and materials) are used on the ladder
- that tools and materials are raised or lowered with a hand-line.
- the ladder is in a good condition
- the ladder is stored, transported and erected carefully
- the ladder stands on a stable, firm surface
- the ladder is not set up on scaffolding or elevated work platforms to gain extra height
- the ladder is stable throughout the project
- the ladder is not used in access areas or within the area of swinging doors
- any hot work (welding or oxy-cutting) is performed on the ground
- you don't use a metal ladder or wooden ladder with wire reinforcement if there is a risk of it coming into contact with live electrical parts. (These ladders should be permanently marked *do not use where an electrical hazard exists*).

Ladder and trestle inspections

It is important to ensure that ladders and trestles are kept in good order.

Inspection checklist for ladders and trestles

Extension Ladders	Checked	Need repair
Loose, broken or missing extension locks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Defective locks not seating properly when ladder extended	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rusted or corroded metal parts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worn, broken or badly deteriorated cords	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trestles	Checked	Need repair
Loose hinges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wobbly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loose or bent hinge spreaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop on hinge spreader broken	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Centre section for extension out of alignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Defective locks for extension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Health Hazard Management

Common health hazards

A health hazard is a hazard that can cause illness or non-traumatic injury to people.

They can be divided into three main categories: physical, biological and chemical.

Physical

- poor ergonomics
- temperature variations
- vibration
- noise
- poor lighting
- dust
- assault
- repetitious work

Chemical (solids, liquids and gases)

- solvents and other chemicals
- pesticides
- paint
- gas
- resins
- acids and caustics

Biological

- bacteria
- insect bite
- poor sanitation
- infectious diseases

Other

- radiation
- computer use

Managing health hazards in a Church environment

The simple guidelines outlined on page 2 in, General Hazard Management can also be used to manage health hazards.

To assist you to identify health hazards use the [Hazard Identification List \(Attachment B\)](#). You may also find it useful to use an [Annual Hazard Review Form \(Attachment C\)](#).

Ergonomics and Computer Use



Little things add up.

Poor posture or repetitive actions (like typing) can lead to neck, wrist and back pain. Eyes can also be damaged. Anyone using personal computers in an office environment should adopt safe work practices.

Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the process of designing or arranging workplaces, equipment, products and systems so that they fit the needs of the people who use them.

Sometimes, simple changes to work methods are all it takes to prevent injury and illness. They not only make people more comfortable, they can increase productivity too.

Repetitive strain injury is the most common problem where ergonomics are poor. Wrists, elbows and shoulders are most commonly affected.

It's not just about furniture and equipment. Job design, lighting, noise, air quality, office landscaping and personal space can all impact the health of your workers.

Specialist publications on ergonomics can be obtained from the WorkCover Authority in your state.

Setting up the workstation

Take a close look at the workstation. Sometimes the simplest adjustment can reduce fatigue and discomfort for people in a workstation.

Key considerations are:

- Use a chair with good lumbar support. Adjust the backrest to ensure it supports the natural curve of the lower back.
- Adjust the height of the seat. Thighs should be parallel to the floor and feet kept in contact with the floor.
- Elbows should be at or about level with the home row on the keyboard. If the height of the chair needs to be adjusted, consider using a footrest to ensure feet are stable.
- Make sure the monitor is at the right height, angle and distance to enable viewing of the screen in comfort. (Australian and New Zealand Standards recommend a viewing distance of between 350mm and 750mm with a maximum of 400mm from the work surface to the centre of the screen.
- The situation may vary for people with graded spectacles.
- Ensure that documents are positioned at a suitable height. If necessary, use a document holder. These are usually available at low cost.

Planning work

One of the best ways to avoid injury during repetitive work is to plan the project.

- try and vary the types of tasks so that different muscle groups are used
- take frequent short breaks away from the desk
- pace the work
- rest your eyes – look away from the screen frequently, preferably at something distant
- don't over-reach – either place the printer, files and other work equipment within easy reach or in a place where you have to leave your chair to access them.

Noise

Excessive noise can cause permanent damage to people's hearing. When dealing with legislative requirements and excessive noise, many factors need to be considered. These include how loud the noise is, how often it's heard and how long people are exposed to it.

Noise and Churches

Noise was not seen as a problem for Churches in the past. This is rapidly changing as places of worship embrace new technologies in their services. Public address systems and sound systems are now common sources of noise in Churches.

There are three groups of people to be considered when thinking about noise in Churches: neighbours, employees and the congregation.

Case study

A local council recently prosecuted a Church for excessive noise. The Church was found guilty and the subsequent fine and legal costs were in the vicinity of \$15,000.

Noise and Church neighbours

Churches must be sensitive to the needs of their neighbours.

OH&S regulations have a range of obligations in relation to noise. Some local councils also impose noise regulations under their health by-laws. If, after checking the applicable regulations, you believe you have a noise problem, seek professional advice and act on it.

Noise and Church employees

Employers have a responsibility under OH&S and Workers Compensation legislation to ensure their employees do not sustain an injury in the course of their employment.

Hearing loss is defined as an *injury* in this legislation. Long-term exposure to noise can cause hearing loss. This is not uncommon where people are exposed to highly amplified music.

Check the noise levels at your Church. While noise levels are likely to be highest during worship services, the noise is not likely to be sustained over extended periods. So, it is unlikely that Church employees will suffer from permanent hearing damage, but it's always worth checking – for peace of mind.

Noise and the congregation

Different age groups have different tastes in music and worship styles. Some can tolerate more noise. Some cannot.

Rather than risk losing members of your congregation, there are ways to manage the noise levels so everyone can enjoy the experience.

Managing noise

One option is to modify volume so that all generations can enjoy the service. Consider the placement of the speakers – and the number of speakers. Keep the congregation informed, if there is likely to be a date where louder music is being played – for example – encourage older members of the congregation to sit further from the speakers.

Chemicals

Chemicals and Churches

It is often surprising how many common items are classed as hazardous substances. Detergents and oven cleaners that can be harmful if ingested or inhaled. Glues, liquid paper, solvents and photocopier toners can also be hazardous – especially in poorly ventilated offices. Petrol, poisons, gardening chemicals and heavy duty cleaning products in storage sheds can cause serious ill-health if not handled safely.

Managing hazardous substances

Exposure to some hazardous substances can cause many problems – from mild rashes to fatal reactions.

Most states have a Code of Practice that provides guidelines for handling hazardous substances. Copies are available from your WorkCover Authority.

Here are some simple steps to minimise the hazard.

Some key considerations are:

- make sure all hazardous substances are properly labeled and left in their original packaging
- keep them securely stored
- make sure anyone using the chemical knows the dangers – and uses appropriate protective clothing
- keep a register of all hazardous materials on your property
- obtain a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) from the manufacturer for all hazardous substances
- put copies of the MSDSs at the point of use and keep a copy on file

It is important that garden sheds and other areas where toxic substances are kept are locked. All hazardous substances must be kept out of reach of children. An MSDS guidance document is available ([Attachment T](#)).

Non-physical hazards

Hazards are not just physical dangers they can come from work pressures, harassment, threats, discrimination, boredom or lack of recognition. These hazards – real or imagined – usually cause a high level of stress.

Personal hazards in a Church environment

Different people handle stress in different ways.

What may initially seem exciting, inspiring and challenging might become a negative experience if it turns out to be too demanding, too intense and excessively time consuming. This may result in physical symptoms loosely termed as stress.

Stress can affect office staff and ministry team members which can result in anxiety and depression. If the causes are not addressed, they may result in a workers' compensation or liability claim against your Church.

Stress symptoms

Managers and pastors/ministers need to be able to recognise when someone is feeling stressed. Some of the more common signs are: frequent absence from work, frequent complaints of headache and abdominal pain, mood swings and unusual or irrational behaviour.

Handling personal hazards

Handling personal hazards – and the stress they can cause – requires empathy and common sense.

Work Pressures

Church staff are, usually, dedicated workers who just want to help. Sometimes these people are unintentionally exposed to extra work pressures. Pressure that can cause anxiety, depression and, sometimes, physical symptoms.

Managing work pressures

There are many issues that need to be considered. Some of the more common include:

The need to feel wanted. Often staff need to feel they are seen as more than a clerical resource or an unnoticed member of a not-so-important support team. Consultation with individual members shows them their opinion and input is valued.

Lack of direction. Each member of staff should know exactly what their job is. Written position descriptions are the best way to define their role and responsibilities.

Lack of self esteem. Each staff member should have a degree of autonomy that is appropriate to their position. Allowing them to handle their responsibilities increases their self-esteem.

Lack of confidence – especially around new technologies. Provide appropriate training. Provide regular feedback. Give assistance or counselling where needed.

Overwork. Ensure staff have not taken on more work than they can reasonably handle.

Boredom. Allow social interaction at work and ensure all staff have enough work.

Case study

Work pressures finally got the better of Katherine, an Administration Officer for a Sydney based Faith Organisation.

Already suffering undiagnosed depression and family stress with a sick child, Katherine suffered a serious breakdown caused by an excessive workload and a lack of confidence due to poor training.

With no-one to talk to about her stresses at work, her breakdown was legitimate and the Faith Organisation was found negligent.

Discrimination

Discrimination is simply about treating people differently.

This can be because of any sort of perceived difference – a physical or intellectual impairment, religious belief, marital status, race, pregnancy, ethnicity or national origin, age, political opinion, employment status, family status, sexual orientation or other specific beliefs they may hold.

All States have anti-discrimination legislation that makes it unlawful to discriminate against people for who they are, what they may do or how they may behave in their public or private life.

Consequences of discrimination

There are many possible outcomes of discrimination. It can lead to compensation claims or legal action being taken against individuals and Churches under OH&S, Industrial Relations or Equal Opportunity legislation.

Dealing with discrimination

This can be a tricky area for anyone asked to handle the situation.

Some guiding principles include:

Be aware of what constitutes discrimination.

Educate all your staff.

Ensure pastors, ministers, management personnel, employees and those involved in ministry work understand what discrimination is.

Take positive action.

Make sure your people understand it will not be tolerated. A simple way is to have everyone help to draw up a simple anti-discrimination policy.

Safety first.

If anyone in the Church believes they are about to take any action that could be considered discriminatory, have them seek advice from their department leader before proceeding.

Treat it seriously.

When senior pastors or Church management become aware of a complaint, it must be taken seriously and fully investigated. It may be necessary to seek legal advice before carrying out the investigation.

Be seen to act.

Any investigation must be carried out in a timely manner.

Report it.

All matters reported as potentially discriminatory should be reported to Ansvr Insurance. We will then be able to provide appropriate advice.

Harassment



Sometimes called bullying, harassment is any unreasonable and unwanted provocative action. It can be as simple as deliberately annoying someone, provoking a hostile response, or putting undue pressure on another person.

Harassment and the Church

While there are very few examples of harassment in Churches, we must remain vigilant. It can come from anywhere – from your employees, Church leaders, volunteers or visitors. No matter who is causing the harassment, it is the Church's responsibility to stop it.

The best defence is to provide an environment where harassment is seen as unacceptable.

Encourage openness. Most often bullies are able to continue their harassment because their victims are simply too afraid to report it.

Effects of harassment

Harassment can have serious effects on your Church.

- the harassed employees can make more mistakes
- there is often less co-operation on all projects – so a negative environment develops
- staff can make workers' compensation claims
- valued workers may resign

Reducing the incidence of harassment

If your Church is aware of an alleged incident of harassment it must be reported to Ansvar Insurance who will provide appropriate advice.

There are some very clear steps you can take to protect your Church from harassment:

- make a statement – clearly state your intolerance of workplace bullying.
- listen – be aware of what is occurring in the work environment.
- look for the signs – check the workplace for indications of harassment.
- have a process – establish clear procedures to deal with complaints.
- be prompt – investigating all complaints immediately
- be firm – take action quickly – and stick to your decision.
- keep a record – all incidents of harassment or bullying should be filed.

Occupational Health Controls

Churches and hygiene health exposures

Where people may be exposed to hazards like noise, dust, asbestos, radiation and Legionella – appropriate controls must be put in place. The most likely health exposures to occur in a Church environment are asbestos and Legionella.

Asbestos

Exposure to asbestos fibres in the atmosphere could lead to a terminal illness. Such as illness can take 10 to 20 years to manifest.

Asbestos may be found in many places including insulation, wall and floor tiles, electrical switchboards, roofs, fences and lagging on pipes. Most forms of asbestos found in buildings are not hazardous unless their surface has been damaged.

It is most unlikely that asbestos will be located in buildings erected after 1983.

If your Church buildings were constructed before 1983 you will have obligations under Occupational Health and Safety legislation to ensure that asbestos is not a risk to the health of people visiting your property.

You may be required to:

- establish an Asbestos Register
- establish an ongoing inspection program
- install appropriate signage
- remove unstable asbestos
- warn maintenance workers of the presence of asbestos so they can take appropriate precautions

If you need help to establish whether there is asbestos on the Church property, contact your WorkCover Authority or Ansvr Insurance.

Legionella

Legionella is a type of bacteria that can be spread through poorly maintained cooling towers in evaporative air-conditioning systems. If inhaled, this can cause Legionnaires Disease – a pneumonia-like disease that often results in death.

Legionella and Churches

There is some potential for risk of Legionella at larger Churches with commercial air-conditioning systems. All Churches that have an evaporative air-conditioning system incorporating cooling towers need to ensure the system is properly maintained.

This is a job best left to experts.

Next steps

To protect your Church and the congregation you should:

- institute a maintenance contract with a qualified and accredited air-conditioning service company
- seek written confirmation they will service your equipment in line with the applicable legislation in your state
- promptly institute any necessary remedial work that may be recommended as a result of the regular inspections carried out by the contractor
- maintain a file of the service dockets supplied by the contractor. These need to be available for inspection by your WorkCover Authority.

Food poisoning

Care should be taken whenever food is served. With catering, for example, there is a very real risk of food poisoning unless stringent hygiene measures are in place.

Case study

There was an instance in Melbourne where three hundred people became ill as a result of a meal served at a religious festival.

For more details, check *Page 18, People Protection, Food Safety*.

Occupational Health & Safety Act 1991

OH&S and you

This act has been set up to ensure the safety of all employees. It applies to the relationship that exists between employers and paid employees. It also places a duty of care on employers and occupiers of premises to ensure they do not adversely affect the health and safety of their community.

In early 2008, the then Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, announced a national review into model Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Laws. Please make sure you check the government website www.deewr.gov.au for any changes to OHS laws.

The legislation applies equally to all employers regardless of size. It includes employees, volunteers, contractors and invitees.

Employees

Even if you only have one paid employee, that person will be covered by the provisions of the legislation.

Volunteers

The provisions of the legislation apply equally to volunteers. Indeed, because of their lack of expertise in the areas in which they may be working, they are owed an even greater duty of care than a paid employee.

Contractors

People who are contracted to perform maintenance work are covered by the legislation to the extent that the Church must not do anything to place them at risk of injury. Contractors are however, responsible for their own health and safety in relation to things within their own control and knowledge.

Invitees

Any person who enters the Church property at the invitation of the Church is owed a duty of care under OH&S legislation. Such a person must not be exposed to a risk of injury.

You must comply with OH&S requirements.

The good news? It is often easier for Churches to address these requirements than it is for major industrial employers.

The Church's duty of care under the OH&S Act

In broad terms, the obligations for the Church are the same as for any employer. They include:

Providing a safe physical environment. You must provide and maintain buildings and equipment in good repair and provide safe systems of work for employees and others.

Providing adequate facilities. This includes first aid facilities, adequate lighting and sufficient work space

Managing hazards. You must establish effective methods for identifying and dealing with hazards.

Safety First

- Employees must receive adequate information, instruction, training and supervision for all tasks
- Employees must be trained in the safe handling and storage of hazardous substances
- Material Safety Data Sheets must be made available
- All steps to ensure the safety of contractors in the workplace must be taken
- Personal protective equipment must be provided where necessary. This includes gloves for gardeners and goggles for people mowing lawns

Learning from past experiences. Every accident that harmed or could have harmed someone must be recorded. Serious injuries must be reported.

It's everyone's responsibility

Employees, whether paid or voluntary, have a responsibility to their employer and to their colleagues. They must:

- comply with lawful instructions
- not behave in a willful and reckless manner
- use any protective equipment provided
- follow all OH&S policies and procedures
- report all hazards to the OH&S Co-ordinator

OH&S legislation varies from state to state. Please obtain a copy of the OH&S laws and regulations that apply in your state. They can be obtained from your local WorkCover Authority.

Getting started

Make someone responsible.

Appoint an OH&S Co-ordinator. The best option is a Church member willing to fill the position. Someone with some knowledge of the OH&S requirements in your state.

This section provides you with a structured approach to comply with the main provisions of the legislation. It is designed to make the task of complying with the legislation less onerous.

To set up an OH&S program for your Church, read this section thoroughly and complete the Action Plan/Audit Tool Template (Attachment L). This template can also be used to audit your OH&S program annually, ensuring that your Church continues to comply with the legislation.

1. OH&S policy

Does my Church need a Health and Safety Policy?

Yes.

All Churches should have an OH&S Policy outlining their commitment to safety. *The Health and Safety Policy (Attachment M)* may be used as a basis for complying with legislation. It should be adjusted to suit the needs of your Church and signed by the relevant people. It should be reviewed, re-signed, updated and reissued annually.

The policy should be issued to all Church leaders and displayed on the Church notice board.

2. Safety rules

Does my Church need a set of safety rules?

Yes.

There should be written safety rules issued on the same basis as the OH&S Policy.

The rules need to be relevant to your Church and may vary according to the physical nature of the Church property and congregation. See *Health and Safety Rules (Attachment N)* for an example.

3. Housekeeping

Is a formalised form of housekeeping necessary in the Church?

It makes sense to.

Documented inspections don't just keep your Church neater, they keep it safer. Regular inspections help you manage risks like trip hazards, potential causes of fire and blocked exits.

Have inspections carried out by the OH&S Co-ordinator accompanied by a different Church leader or employee on each occasion. A fresh pair of eyes may notice hazards that someone inspecting on a regular basis could overlook.

To help, we have included a checklist similar to the *Housekeeping Checklist (Attachment O)*. Completed copies of the checklist should be signed and dated by the person carrying out the inspection.

All problems identified should be rectified as soon as possible.

4. Consultation and participation

Does my Church need to have a Health and Safety Committee?

No.

But you must consult with employees on all matters relating to OH&S. A Safety Committee is an easy way to do this.

If you don't have a Safety Committee, you should:

- consult regularly. This could be in the form of information sessions at leaders' meetings and/or members' meetings on a regular basis
- take suggestions on board. Attendees should be encouraged to offer suggestions and ask questions regarding OH&S issues at these meetings.

Occupational Health & Safety Act 1991 (cont'd)

5. Training

What health and safety training should my Church provide?

It will vary from Church to Church.

Your OH&S Co-ordinator should be made aware of their legal responsibilities for training under the OH&S legislation.

Basic OH&S awareness training should be provided to leaders who need to train others.

An induction package should be provided to volunteer workers. A copy of the completed induction checklist should be kept on file for all volunteer workers and leaders.

An example of an Induction Checklist can be found at [\(Attachment P\)](#).

6. Hazard management

How should the Church address the issue of hazard management?

The best way to manage hazards is good housekeeping and regular maintenance.

The Housekeeping Checklist [\(Attachment O\)](#) and an Annual Hazard Review [\(Attachment C\)](#) may help.

When you've identified what needs to be addressed, rank the hazards in order of their potential to cause injury or damage. Address the most dangerous hazard first. Carry on down the list until all are rectified.

All employees, leaders and voluntary workers should be encouraged to report perceived hazards to the OH&S Co-ordinator. These should be recorded on a Hazard Report Form [\(Attachment D\)](#). We have also included a Hierarchy of Controls [\(Attachment J\)](#). This helps you decide the best way to deal with potential hazards.

7. First aid

Has my Church a responsibility to provide trained first aiders?

No.

There is no legal requirement. But it makes sense to have trained first aiders available where possible, especially when there are many people on the property at the one time.

We recommend:

- trained first aiders are available during services and major functions where possible
- an appropriate first aid kit is accessible at all times. See First Aid Guidance [\(Attachment Q\)](#).

8. Emergency response planning

Does my Church need an emergency response plan?

Yes.

A simple emergency response procedure should be in place. You can find information on what should be included on page 17 of Property Protection.

See page 3, Fire Protection for information about the appropriate fire-fighting equipment required. See also Extinguisher Identification and Use [\(Attachment R\)](#).

9. Accident reporting and investigation

Does my Church need to keep a record of any injuries occurring on the site?

Yes.

All incidents that cause injury or illness, or those that have the potential to do so, should be reported. An Incident Report form should be completed by the OH&S Co-ordinator and either the person injured or those reporting the incident. [\(See Attachment D.\)](#) A record should also be kept of incidents that cause or could cause damage to property.

This helps to

- prevent a recurrence of a similar incident
- provide information to insurers if requested
- identify and record corrective action.

10. Purchasing

What responsibilities does my Church have when looking to purchase plant or equipment?

Think safety first.

When purchasing major items of plant or equipment, there are many matters to be considered. These can include price, suitability for the job and how the item will look. You must also consider the effects that such an item may have on the health and safety of people using it.

The best way of ensuring that major purchases do not harm anyone is to confirm that they comply with the relevant Australian Standard. Non-Australian products should comply with an International Standard. Look for the Australian Standard stamp or identification plate. If you cannot find one, ask the manufacturer to provide proof that the product complies with the appropriate standards.

11. Manual handling

How should manual handling be dealt with in a Church environment?

Again, think safety first.

You can find information on dealing with manual handling issues on page 2, *Manual Handling Hazards*. If your people risk injury from heavy or repetitive lifting tasks, you will need to comply with the Manual Handling Code of Practice. This explains how to identify, assess and control manual handling risks.

If your Church needs additional help in this area, contact your state's WorkCover Authority or Ansvr Insurance.

12. Occupational health controls

Does my Church have a responsibility to protect people from hygiene health exposures?

Yes.

Where people may be put at risk due to health exposures, appropriate controls must be put in place. This includes exposure to noise, dust, asbestos, radiation and Legionella. To establish how these can be best dealt with refer to Page 15, *Occupational Health Controls*.

13. Control of hazardous substances

What controls do Churches need in relation to hazardous substances?

See page 11, *Chemicals* for advice on how to deal with hazardous substances. The Hazardous Substances Inventory (*Attachment T*) and Material Safety Data Sheet Guidance Document (*Attachment S*) provide extra information.

14. Contractors

Does the Church have a duty of care to contractors working on the site?

Yes.

Any contractors who come to work at your Church must be aware of the Church's OH&S policy and any special safety rules that apply. Your Church has a duty of care for all contractors working at your sites.

We recommend, before allowing contractors to work on the premises, they sign the Contractor's Log (*Attachment U*). This shows they have received a copy of the Church's OH&S policy as well as a copy of the Health and Safety Rules. (*Attachments M and N*).

Some things to consider when contractors are on the Church property:

- Are they licensed? Ask for proof of relevant qualifications, such as a license for electricians and plumbers.
- Are they covered? Ask for proof of current public liability insurance. The policy number and expiry date should be noted and recorded by the Church.
- Do they know the drill? Give them a brief induction explaining fire extinguisher locations, first aid facilities, exits and any unusual dangers on the Church property.
- Will they be safe? If they are to undertake hazardous work such as welding or working at heights, ask what precautions they are taking.
- Should you watch? If you believe there may be danger to people or the premises, watch them while they work.
- Make them asbestos aware. Show them your asbestos register if your premises contain asbestos.

15. Electrical installations and equipment

What precautions should be taken with electrical installations?

Page 11 Property Protection, Electrical Safety contains information about electrical installation and equipment safety.

16. Working at heights

Are there special precautions to be taken if people work at heights on the Church property?

Yes.

Page 6, Working at Heights provides information about working at heights. There are special precautions to be taken when people are working at heights on Church property.

17. Notification

Does the Church have a legal obligation to report certain occurrences?

Yes.

There are a number of events that have a legal obligation to be reported to the appropriate state government department or related body. These vary from State to State, but may include:

Injuries to workers such as:

- a work injury that causes death
- a work related injury that has acute symptoms associated with a substance at work
- a work related injury requiring treatment as an in-patient at a hospital

Occupational Health & Safety Act 1991 (cont'd)

A dangerous occurrence where there was immediate and significant risk to any person in or near the Church property. This could be from:

- the collapse, overturn or failure of the load-bearing part of scaffolding, a lift or crane
- damage to or malfunction of major plant equipment
- the unintended collapse or failure of an excavation that is more than 1.5m deep, or of any shoring
- the unintended collapse or partial collapse of a building or structure under construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair or demolition
- the floor, wall or ceiling of a building being used as a workplace
- an uncontrolled explosion, fire or the escape of any hazardous substance or gas, including steam
- an electrical short circuit malfunction or explosion
- an unintended or uncontrolled incident or event arising from operations carried out at the workplace

Check your local OH&S regulations for exact requirements.

In the event of a serious incident occurring, nothing should be disturbed without the permission of a government inspector.

18. Rehabilitation

Does the Church have a duty to help with the rehabilitation of an injured employee?

Yes.

Church employees injured in the course of their duties are a Church responsibility. The aim is to return them to the physical condition they were in immediately prior to their injury and return them to their former occupation or as close to that situation as possible. The Church has a legal obligation to help with the rehabilitation of an injured employee.

Where an injury requires treatment from a medical practitioner, immediate notification should be given to your Workers' Compensation insurance provider/agent for guidance on rehabilitation responsibilities.

19. Documentation

Should the Church keep documentation regarding health and safety matters?

Yes.

Your Church must keep documentation regarding health and safety matters.

We recommend the following steps:

- the OH&S Co-ordinator should maintain a file on all OH&S initiatives
- records should be kept of all people attending OH&S training sessions
- simple minutes should be kept of any meetings relating to OH&S
- a new copy of the OH&S Action Plan and Audit Tool should be completed each year ([Attachment L](#))
- the Annual Hazard Review ([Attachment C](#)) should be completed each year
- all site-specific OH&S documentation should be reviewed and updated on an agreed regular basis

20. Penalties

Will the Church face penalties if it fails to comply with OH&S legislation and regulations?

Yes.

Failure to comply carries severe penalties. The penalties vary but range from thousands of dollars for employees to hundreds of thousands for employers.

Jail terms may also be imposed for extremely serious and repeat offences.

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