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Your church needs to be safe for the protection of worshipers, visitors and employees.



Building works

During large building projects, you are responsible for health and safety at your church under the [Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015](#).

You may need to hire a principal designer or principal contractor to plan, manage and monitor health and safety before and during the building work.

Your architect or surveyor will help you make these appointments.

Asbestos

Asbestos is the biggest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK.

Most of our churches were built or restored before asbestos was used in construction. But you can still find it in:

- 20th century extensions or alterations
- Heating systems
- Pipe lagging
- Organ blowers
- Roofing materials

Managing asbestos in buildings is regulated by law since 2006. You are responsible for assessing if asbestos is likely to be found in your church.

When making the assessment:

- Take all reasonable steps for your specific circumstance
- Consider the condition of the asbestos which is, or assumed to be, in your church
- Take account of the building plans, the age of the church, and any other relevant information
- Inspect all parts of the church which are reasonably accessible
- Review your inspection if you suspect that it is no longer valid or there has been a significant change in the building

If your assessment shows that asbestos is, or is likely to be in your church:

- Determine the risk to people's health
- Write a plan to identify all the parts of the building concerned
- Take measures to manage the risk (e.g. monitor condition, maintenance, removal, provide information about its location)
- Record the measures you've taken
- Review the plan regularly

Find out more about asbestos

If your church is small and you've not planned any maintenance work, Health and Safety Executive guidance says that you can carry out the assessment yourself (if appropriate).

But if there is maintenance or repair work planned, you should hire a trained person to do the inspection.

Working at height

Because of the number of accidents that happen in the workplace, all work at height is regulated by law.

To prevent serious accidents:

- Plan and supervise the work: don't carry out any work at height if you can do it in a safer way (e.g. taking light fittings down to clean them)
- Take reasonable measures to avoid someone falling from high enough to cause personal injury
- Install barriers or fall arrest systems if you need to access an area regularly (e.g. roofs & gutters)

Find out more about working at height

Lightning protection systems

Lightning can cause great structural damage to a church building.

A lightning protection system protects the building and the electrical equipment by sending the strike's energy to the ground and discharging it safely.

Unprotected churches are five times more likely to suffer strike damage than those with lightning protection.

Ask your architect or surveyor about installing a lightning protection system.

Helpful hint:

Please be aware that many lightning conductors are damaged or removed during metal theft.

Find out more about preventing thefts

Lifting equipment

You are responsible for making sure that all lifting equipment (including font covers) and attachments are strong and stable enough to carry the load being raised or lowered under the [Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998](#).

You should inspect the equipment at regular intervals or during a risk-based inspection scheme. Your insurer will supply this service.

If you do not comply with this law, your church may be in breach of health and safety legislation. You could get an unlimited fine in the event of an accident.

[Find out more about lighting equipment](#)

Other risk preventions

Locking up at night

If you are locking up your church building or hall, make sure you check all the areas to which the public have access. Make sure no one is left inside.

In one extreme case, a person was tragically found dead from hypothermia after having been accidentally locked in a church overnight.

Toilets

You should be able to open toilet doors from the outside in case of an emergency.

It may be necessary to build a vision panel or a gap above or below the door to enable checks to be easily made.

Gravestones

Unstable gravestones can cause accidents. The Ministry of Justice has written guidance to help you assess and manage the safety risk.

The guidance includes information on:

- assessing risks
- inspecting memorials
- deciding on precautions
- keeping records
- communicating with the public

[Find out more about unstable gravestones](#)

Want more help?

Health and safety in the construction industry

[Assess the risks and insure against them](#)

Risk management

[Everything from floods and fire, to accidents and risk assessments](#)

Church insurance

[Everything from events to caring for people on your premise](#)

Lightning conductors

[Calculate the separation between your conductors and other materials](#)

Also of interest



Disaster prevention and management



Building maintenance and repair



Accessibility



ring loops

Making changes to your church and churchyard

Go through the steps of a major building project

