

Safety Inspection Checklist

Although ministries don't tend to think of themselves as businesses, religious nonprofit organizations share some of the same legal concerns as for-profit companies. Importantly, ministries may be at even greater risk for liability and loss than some secular businesses.

It's impossible to avoid all risk — especially in the ministry, where the mission statement is to welcome all people. This checklist will not fit all conditions, but it can serve as a guide. The suggested frequencies are recommended minimums. Some situations could call for more frequent inspections. Be sure to include all areas of the church when conducting the review.

FACILITIES SAFETY

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Are your parking lots well lit? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are steps of uniform height and free of slip hazard? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are external walkways and parking lots well maintained and free of hazards? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are steps and ramps marked to make them easily visible? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are emergency exits clearly marked and accessible? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have slip-free mats and flooring where appropriate? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are stairs and steps in good repair with handrails, treads and risers in proper proportion? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are full-length glass doors and windows properly marked with decals? |

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Do surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do all openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does protective surfacing extend at least six feet in all directions from play equipment? For swings, does surfacing extend twice the height of the suspending bar in back and front? | <input type="checkbox"/> Does equipment have any sharp points or edges? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are play structures more than 30 inches high and spaced at least nine feet apart? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any tripping hazards, such as exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Has all dangerous hardware been removed (open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do elevated surfaces (platforms and ramps) have guardrails to prevent falls? |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Are children carefully supervised while on playgrounds to make sure they're safe? |

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Do electrical panels have clear access and are they clearly marked? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is all machinery and equipment grounded? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do all outlets, switches and boxes have covers? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are all mechanical, electrical and air-conditioning systems inspected and serviced on an annual basis by a professional technician? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is permanent wiring in place with no extension cords? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a preventive maintenance/inspection program in place? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you use cordless microphones in or near the baptismal tank? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are exposed wiring and extension cords taped or marked to avoid trip hazards? | |

ROOF MAINTENANCE

It is highly recommended that churches use a licensed roofing contractor rather than a volunteer or church staff member to conduct the inspection.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any missing or damaged roof shingles? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the roof excessively soiled? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roof flashing is the number one source of leaks and related damages. Is all flashing securely attached and seams caulked to prevent water seepage? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there signs of algae growth on any component of the roof or drains? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the roof have any curled or rippled shingles? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are gutters clean of debris such as leaves, branches and trash, so run-off water from the roof can flow to the ground? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the rooftop equipment mounted properly, i.e., vents, HVAC equipment, steeples secured to the roof with tie downs to prevent lifting from wind? | <input type="checkbox"/> Does the roof have any sunken areas, standing water or evidence of pooling? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the roof excessively flex while walking across the surface? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any interior signs of water damage on ceilings? Water-stained ceilings or ceiling tiles? |

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FIRE SAFETY

- Are all exit corridors free of storage items and furniture, allowing free access to exits?
- Are all stairwells free of combustibles materials and storage items?
- Are all fire extinguishers accessible? Show a charge and have the inspection tag? Have security zip tie and pin installed?
- Are all exit and directional signs present and illuminated?
- Are building exit doors free of key-operated deadbolts? Open easily without special knowledge? Allow free access to the exterior of the building?
- Are office areas organized? Permit accessibility to fire exits?
- Are kitchen areas clean and allow free access to exits? Range hoods cleaned regularly and free of grease build-up?
- Are main electrical rooms free of all storage and combustibles materials?
- Do you have three feet of clearance in front of all circuit breakers?
- Are laundry dryers vented to the exterior of the building through metal conduit?
- Are areas around the heating system and water heater free of storage materials? Inspected by a licensed and insured contractor at least annually?
- Are paint supplies and flammable liquids stored in flame-proof storage containers and/or cabinets?
- Are sprinkler heads free of signs of damage, paint or hanging storage?
- Are all recommended tests run on schedule?
 - » **Inspectors fire alarm test** — designed to ensure a signal is received by the central monitoring station when a sprinkler system has flowing water or a smoke alarm detects smoke (if monitored).
 - » **Two-inch drain (main drain) test** — used to measure water pressures in the sprinkler system when the drain valve is open and flowing and when closed.
 - » **Weekly fire pump churn test** — used to maintain the functionality of an installed fire pump. Fire pumps boost the volume of water that will flow through the sprinkler system. (Not all properties have fire pumps.)
 - » **Annual inspection** — completed by a licensed and insured contractor in accordance with the local municipality fire and building codes to ensure functionality of the system. Churches should consider working proactively with their local fire department for planning assistance and fire evacuation/response drills.

THEFT AND VANDALISM PREVENTION

- Does the church checkbook require a dual signature and limited or capped amount that can be written without records documented with both receipts and photographs?
- Does the church use a third-party reconciliation of the church books?
- Are cash amounts from giving counted and deposited on the same day received or, at the very least, locked into a secure safe?
- For groups raising money for ministries through pancake breakfasts, chili dinners or other cash transactions, does the business committee oversee how the funds are accounted for?
- Is the church petty cash controlled through a redundancy requiring two-party signatures and documentation process?
- If the church keeps its doors unlocked during the day or evening, is there an alarm system that will alert staff members when visitors enter the building?
- Does the church have a current asset inventory list of all physical items including, but not limited to, stained glass windows, artwork, furniture, office equipment, computer equipment, sound systems, musical instruments, dining or kitchen appliances, maintenance tools and lawn and garden tools?
- Does the church have a current asset inventory list of all documents, i.e., vehicle titles, property deeds, confidential church committee expense controls and receipts?
- Are all doors, windows, doorbell ringers, cameras and central monitoring station alarms tested each month?
- Are church safes branded with a UL listing for fire or theft?
- Are background checks performed on all new-hire employees and individuals who have access to church finances or physical assets? And are your church treasurer and other appropriate people bonded?
- Does the church participate in a community Neighborhood Watch?
- Has the church invited a member of the law enforcement community to participate and conduct a risk assessment of the church property within the past year?
- Does the church have an accurate and up-to-date key control program and policy to monitor who has keys to the property?

EMPLOYMENT LIABILITY

In the last decade, the majority of church lawsuits have resulted from employment liability issues. This checklist will not fit all conditions, but it can serve as a guide.

- Do you have a written policies and procedures manual?
- Do you have a written job description for each paid and volunteer position in the church?
- Do you conduct annual performance reviews?
- Do you document disciplinary actions?
- Do you maintain accurate files for your employees and volunteers?
- Is a policy in place that allows employees to file a complaint, and are the complaints taken seriously?

MATERIAL HANDLING SAFETY

- Has the lifting of excessive weights been minimized at the church?
- Have mechanical devices such as carts, dollies, furniture floor sliders and lifting straps been provided for those who are responsible for lifting materials?
- Have workers and volunteers been trained in correct lifting and handling techniques before work assignments?
- Do training techniques require holding the load close to the body?
- Have the distances the object is being moved been minimized?
- Have reaches below knee level been minimized?
- Have reaches above shoulder level been minimized?
- Have extended reaches been minimized?
(Recommended reach distance from the standing position is 16 to 18 inches; recommended reach distance from the sitting position is 14 to 16 inches.)
- Do the workers twist at the waist during lifts?
- Is help available for heavy or awkward lifts?
- Have pushing and pulling forces been minimized?
- Has repetition been addressed using job rotation?
- Has repetition been addressed using rest breaks?
- Is the standing/walking surface level, clean, dry and wide enough?
- Do materials and parts have handholds?

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING STORAGE AREAS

An organized storage area makes for a safer lift. Here are some suggestions for creating a safer environment for individuals performing material handling tasks:

- » Organize materials on a storage shelf, keeping lighter weight, non-bulky objects stored toward the top and the heavier items toward the bottom.
- » Plan where materials will be stored on shelves so more frequently used items are placed in the safest lifting zone area between your knees and your shoulders.
- » Ensure that shelves are secured to the floor or wall to prevent them from tipping over.
- » Don't overload shelves beyond their rated capacity.
- » If you are using older or homemade shelving units and are uncertain of the rated capacity, contact a building contractor or visit a hardware store to obtain more information.
Once the rating information is obtained, stencil this information on the storage racks or shelves for future reference.
- » Keep walk areas clear of storage items and ensure that floor surfaces are clean and free of trip hazards.

Note: Storing materials on shelves makes good safety sense:

- It helps you organize stored materials to facilitate safe lifting practices.
- It protects against flood damage, particularly in basement and ground-floor storage areas.

This checklist provides a general guideline for risk management and is for informational purposes only. It does not cover all potential risks.

Date of inspection: ____/____/____

Performed by: _____



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