

Breadsall Church Health and Safety Policy

Health & Safety in Churches & Churchyards

General Precautions – Slips, Trips and Falls

1. Introduction

Often simple precautions and preventative measures involving little in the way of expenditure can substantially reduce the risk of damage and injury to persons.

2. Responsibilities

A Parochial Church Council (PCC) is legally responsible for the care and maintenance of their church and churchyard. The PCC's duty is to exercise reasonable care and to fulfil this obligation they must carry out regular inspections of the church and churchyard.

3. Definitions:

1.1 Slips, trips and falls

Slips, trips and falls are a major cause of injuries to volunteers, church members and visitors alike. Hazards are present not just in the church itself but in church halls, churchyards and car parks – in fact anywhere where people are likely to walk. While most injuries are minor, serious injuries can require hospital treatment or lead to permanent disability.

1.2 Footpaths

Regular maintenance is required to ensure these remain free from moss, algae, leaves, holes, loose materials, tree roots and obstructions and are reasonably level. Ramps and steps need particular attention with hand rails and/or lighting provided, if hazardous. Bear in mind the difficulty the frail, elderly and disabled may have in negotiating access to and from the church.

1.3 Steps, stairs and ladders

Bell tower steps, steps down to boiler rooms and access ladders should all be inspected at least annually and any defects remedied. Uneven and worn treads are a positive danger to the unwary and whilst the indentations created by footsteps over many centuries may give a sense of history, they do nothing for safety. External steps down to boiler rooms should not be neglected and these require frequent and careful attention to remove moss, algae, leaves and other debris. They should be protected at the top by railings and a lockable gate, be fitted with a handrail and if used during the hours of darkness be well lit.

1.4 Floors and coverings

Most accidents in churches arise from slips, trips and falls. It is most important that all floor surfaces are inspected regularly and any defective areas made safe immediately and repairs carried out as quickly as possible. Defective floors include unfixed, broken and loose tiles and paving stones. Rotten and loose floorboards and pew platforms are another hazard. Trips and falls are also caused by worn, frayed, loose or unfixed rugs, mats and carpets, and by trailing electric leads and cables. All unfixed floor coverings should be removed or fixed down.

1.5 Churchyards

A principal cause of accidents in churchyards is persons tripping over kerbs or graves that have become obscured by long grass. It is the PCC's duty to ensure that visitors are reasonably safe in the churchyard. If there is a risk of persons tripping over kerbs or graves then the grass must be kept to such a height that the kerb or grave is clearly visible. Regular grass cutting is therefore essential.

1.1 Record-keeping

At Breadsall Church, a record is kept of all maintenance carried out within the church, to boundary walls and in the graveyard. Any safety issues must be dealt with immediately.

Health and Safety Committee, May 2017

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