

## SC045 Safe Physical Environment Procedures

Safe environments are transparent and accountable in relation to both procedures and relationships, where all foreseeable risks and hazards are identified, assessed and managed. In implementing procedures, acknowledging the fact that some activities or situations present more inherent risks than others, consideration should be given to the participants' ages and cultural backgrounds.

The Church Board has a general duty at common law to implement and maintain a "safe system of work" for both their workers and the congregation. This duty is often expressed as being a duty to take reasonable care to avoid exposing the employees to "reasonably foreseeable" risks of injury.

The following physical environment safety procedures are aimed at keeping all people safe at church.

- a. Risk assessment and safety management practices are embedded in our procedures prior to each program, event or activity taking place. We use these practices to inform our planning and operating of all our programs, events or activities. Risk management applies to common law duty of care, Work Health & Safety and specifically to the minimising of safety risks for all people who are in our care.
- b. The Governance Board will delegate the task of management of site and program risks to the relevant workers responsible for risk management (safe environments).
- c. The leadership team is responsible for the identification, assessment and management of all site and program risks, and the reporting and addressing of incidents.

## **Physically safe environments:**

The program/service organiser will:

- a. Conduct a site inspection of the area to be used for a program
- b. Apply hierarchy of control measures where hazards are identified, and communicate control measures with all worker and program participants.

Our church has the following safe environments procedures to ensure the physical safety of all persons associated with our church:

- **safe emotional and spiritual environment procedure**
- **health and safety policy**
- **Site safety checklist**

### **i. First aid**

- All paid workers will hold current first aid training, e.g. St John Ambulance, and there will be a suitably qualified first aid person on site at all programs, events and activities.
- A suitable, up-to-date, stocked and accessible first aid kit is to always be available.
- A record should be kept of any treatment given.
- Analgesics should not form part of your first aid kit.

### **ii. Transportation**

- We will only provide responsible transportation (road rule-abiding, in a registered vehicle, with an appropriately screened and licenced driver).
- None of our workers will be in a car with a child alone.
- At no time will there be more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use.

- If a child is travelling in a vehicle driven by a worker who possesses a provisional licence, prior written consent will, wherever possible, be given by a parent/guardian, except in the case of emergencies.

**iii. Food**

- Food safety & storage guidelines will be followed. These will be available on our website and posted on the wall in our kitchen or food preparation area.
- We have will enquire of our local council to ensure we meet local requirements in relation to food handling.

**iv. Supervision of children**

- To properly exercise our duty of care we will have the right kind of workers as well as adequate numbers of to supervise program participants.
- Precise numbers of workers required for the supervision of a program, event or activity will be determined by taking into account the size of the group, age of participants, and the level of physical and or emotional risk inherent in the activity. For example: Programs aimed at younger and/or disabled children require more supervision due to the increased level of risk involved. We will need many more workers when operating high-risk activities such as taking children or young people off-site, swimming, bushwalks, games nights or the like, or if the group is large.
- As a minimum number there will be 4 adult workers (over 18 years) present (on-site) for all programs, with a minimum of 1:8 ratio workers to participants for low-risk activities, and as high as 1:2 for activities deemed to be high risk.
- We make the distinction between those adults who are part of the team and junior workers (under 18 years) who are not counted in supervision numbers.
- We practice a team/buddy system where no worker will be alone, one-on-one, with a child. One adult with a small group is fine as long as there are other adults on-site.
- All co-ed programs will have both male and female workers to provide support for both males and females.

## **v. Manual Handling**

Manual Handling means any activity requiring force by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any object. Everyone's manual handling capacity is different and depends on their individual ability to handle a load.

Risk Assessment: To reduce manual handling injuries, employees should be encouraged to: assess the size, shape and weight of the load to be moved; whether gloves or protective equipment will influence handling; determine where it is to be placed; how far it will be moved; and decide how it will be handled.

Consider the following strategies, if lifting is required: decide on the best position, clear path and try to face in the direction you will be moving; get a secure grip on the object being handled: the grip helps make manual handling safe; wherever possible, a comfortable power grip with the whole hand should be used rather than a hook or precision grip with fingers only; and make sure you have a firm footing so you don't slip while lifting. Pull the load in close to the body: for lifting in particular, it is important to have the centre of gravity of the load close to the body to prevent excessive stress on the back and to use the strongest muscles of the arms to hold the load; it is important to minimise the effects of acceleration by lifting smoothly, slowly and without jerking; and keep your spine in its natural alignment (maintain normal curves) and avoid twisting whilst lifting.

Manual Lifting: lift the object by straightening your legs, not your back, keeping the load close throughout the lift.

- Seek guidance on manual handling from Workcover authorities in your state
- It is advisable that all leaders are to be briefed in safe lifting techniques annually

## **vi. Working at Heights**

Control measures protecting a person from the risk of falling from a height should be in place before any work at height of 2.4m or above commences.

Several control measures to protect persons from the risk of falling from a height when carrying out work at that height are listed in order of preference: erecting a physical barrier; providing personal fall protection; a measure to "catch" a person after the person has fallen.

Footwear, which minimises the risk of slipping, should be worn when working where there is a risk of falls from heights. Consideration should be given to the surface being worked on. Safety helmets worn by persons should be fitted and attached to the person's head so that it remains in place should a person be arrested in a fall.

When using ladders ensure that they are in good working order and used for the purpose for which they were designed, check safety labels on the ladder from the manufacturer for correct usage.

### **vii. Hazardous Substance Management**

The Health and Safety Team is responsible for:

- Consulting with managers, supervisors, and employees on hazardous substances and the level of compliance with policies, procedures and work practices etc.;
- Ensuring that hazardous substance management is included in the hazard workplace inspections;
- Conducting ongoing training and educational sessions;
- Compiling and maintaining a hazardous substance register; and
- Ensuring risk assessments are conducted on hazardous substances.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS): The supplier of a substance must provide a copy of the current MSDS when first supplying the substance to the organisation and/or when requested. Every hazardous substance has an MSDS. MSDS's are to be read and understood by the workers and reasonable steps are taken to ensure the MSDS is not changed other than by the manufacturer or importer.

The information below will assist you in understanding a little more about material safety data sheets. What are they? Sheets containing important safety, first aid and other information on any chemical sold, under a trade or chemical name. Where do I get them? From the manufacturer of the product who is obliged by law to provide them. When should I get them? Now. All hazardous goods used in the workplace must be accompanied by an MSDS.

How do I get them? Telephone or fax the supplier who will post you one or fax it to you.

How will I know I've got the right document? If the document covers the areas listed below you have procured an MSDS.

- Product Identification: Name of Product, description, supplier's name and telephone number.
- Composition: Chemical name, ingredients and impurities.

- Emergency Information: Fire, spill, over exposure.
- First Aid: Inhalation, ingestion etc.
- Storage: How to handle, special containers, incompatible substances, transport.
- Physical Data: Boiling point, melting point, etc.

*Hazardous Substance register:* When compiling a hazardous substance register a survey should be conducted on all substances in the workplace. Once all substances are identified, the MSDS's are to be obtained; a copy of all MSDS's should be located with the Hazardous Substance register; and the register is to be made available to all staff.

*Labelling:* In the event of de-canting a substance into smaller containers, the supervisor is to ensure a label is affixed to a hazardous substances container. The label is to be in English and state the substance's product name, risk and safety phrases (e.g. Keep away from heat).

If the hazardous substance is transferred from one container into a second container, the container must be labelled stating: the substance's product name; substance's risk and safety phrases; and relevant warning signs/information.

*Unlabelled Substances:* All substances should be labelled. If containers are not labelled and the contents are not known, mark the container – "Caution do not use: unknown substance". Store container away from other substances, and if not identified, contact the local Waste Management Branch of the Department of Environment for appropriate disposal procedures.

*Storage:* The supervisor is to ensure that the storage of hazardous substance is in accordance with the MSDS. If appropriate storage facilities are not available, the substance should not be purchased unless the material can be store at an alternative approved storage site. Correct signage should also be displayed where hazardous substances are stored.

*Handling:* Supervisors are to ensure that: the requirements set out in the MSDS are followed; decanting is to be conducted using the method in the appropriate MSDS; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided where it is not practicable to prevent or reduce exposure by other ways; other control measures such as ventilation equipment that is implemented, is maintained as required; regular monitoring is conducted where it is required; and prohibited substances are not used in the workplace.

*Disposal:* Surveys/inspections should be conducted at all workplaces to identify the hazardous substances used and stored at the workplace, and to identify the products no longer required

which should be disposed of; the relevant MSDS of each hazardous substance identified for disposal should be reviewed to establish the appropriate disposal method.

Containers of hazardous substances should not be washed out in areas where there is a possibility of waste solution entering a storm water drain or natural watercourse.

Transporting Hazardous Substances: Supervisors are to ensure that hazardous substances are transported correctly when they are required within workplace according to the MSDS.

Employees are to: Follow the procedure for hazardous substances; read the MSDS of a hazardous substance before using any of the substance; use the appropriate PPE when handling substances; and report any concerns they may have with any hazardous substances.

### **viii. Electric Safety (General)**

Employers have an obligation to ensure electrical work is performed safely. Electrical work must only be undertaken by licensed electrical workers. They must follow the guidelines of their industry to ensure all those onsite are safe.

Ensure that all electrical equipment is properly safety tagged and in good working order, via a safety audit.

Inspect tools and equipment regularly. Ensure they are maintained in good order.

Ensure the insulation of insulated tools and insulated covers are maintained in good order and suitable for the work situation. Work from a safe position that would require a deliberate movement to contact directly energised conductors or parts.

Always warn others of known hazards. If possible rectify the problem immediately, e.g. turn off mains power. Contact an electrician to arrange for it to be fixed and take appropriate action to ensure safety in the meantime.

### **ix. Working in the Sun**

Virtually all people in Australia are at risk of skin cancer. However, fair-skinned people, particularly those who freckle or who never tan or tan poorly, are more at risk.

Providing shade or scheduling outdoor work to hours other than the middle of the day is the simplest solution. Where this is not practicable, steps to ensure minimum effects are gained from working in the sun e.g. wear the most appropriate clothing to complete your task, wear a wide brim hat, wear eye-protection, application of sunscreen lotion (SPF30+ or greater), and constantly drink water to ensure the body is kept adequately hydrated during the day.

### **x. Handling and Disposal of Sharps Procedure (General)**

The term “sharps” means pointed or cutting implements that are capable of inflicting a penetrating injury.

Steps involved with the safe handling and disposal of sharps once located: protective gloves should always be worn; use a set of tongs or similar item to pick up the sharp; dispose sharp into a puncture resistant sharps container; check for any more sharps in the vicinity; place puncture resistant sharps container in the nearest collection wheelie bins, or other authorized disposal facilities as available from time to time. Wheelie bins are collected by waste removal contractors and disposed of safely. Sharps should never be: bent; broken; or re-sheathed, as these are unsafe practices and are common causes of sharps injuries.

#### **xi. Noise & visual management Procedure**

It is important that safe visual and auditory care is provided for leaders and those attending programs as part of the church.

Noise is unwanted sound which may cause damage to hearing. The amount of damage caused by noise depends on the total amount of exposure received over time. Measurement of Noise Exposure is expressed as: the noise exposure for a workday in Daily Noise Dose (DND); the

“loudest noise”, is called a peak level. Exposure to a noise level of 85dB(A) over an 8-hour period amounts to a DND of 1. Long-term exposure to a DND of less than 1 does not result in permanent hearing loss.

Auditory care: consideration is to be given to auditory comfort when setting volume levels of audio equipment; volume of audio equipment during church events should be kept at less than 85 decibels (Additional information on impact of noise may be found at [www.hearing.com.au](http://www.hearing.com.au)).

Visual Care: effective lighting is to be used during all church events; faulty lights are not to be used during church events; faulty light globes and fittings are to be brought to the notice of the Church Safety Team and are to be replaced as soon as practicable.

#### **xii. Use of church buildings**

To assist with the management of your organization, it is important to remember that there can also be risks associated with the design, maintenance and safety of indoor and outdoor environment. Areas that you may wish to address includes: poor lighting, unsafe watercourses, lakes, boundary fences and gates; the positioning of shrubbery and toilet blocks; and the late collection of children in poorly/unlit car parks.



**Building Access:** The Church will check that the building is safe and easily accessible, e.g. easy to open wide doors; clear and visible signage; reduced hazards, or if hazards remain they are highlighted. Use the Housekeeping Checklist to help assess your buildings annually.

**Issuing Keys to Buildings:** The Church Business Manager/Administrator will be responsible for maintaining a register of all persons to whom a key/security code has been issued. These records are to be held in the Church Office and be available to insurance company and/or police in event of request from those parties following any break-ins etc.

**Hiring Church Property:** Before hiring out Church property the following process is to be followed: Ensure any property or equipment to be hired is well maintained and free of known defects (e.g. flooring in good condition, power-points, cables and electrical equipment in good repair.)

Make sure that you understand the purpose for which the property is being hired. Do not hire the property to groups that do not meet the Church's standards. Do not hire the property for a purpose that could substantially increase the risk of damage to the property, or result in injury to other people accessing the building.

It is the hirers responsibility for cleaning, behaviour and any damage they may cause, that they are responsible for any of their own property they may bring on to the Church's property. Ask for written evidence of Public Liability insurance and keep a copy of it on file (Certificate of currency from the hirer's insurer).

Where possible a Church employee or member should be responsible for opening and closing the area hired.

Notify the Church's insurer of any claim submitted or potential claims, which arise from the hiring of the property