

**HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT
FOR
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND CONGREGATIONS**

INTRODUCTION

Under Health & Safety legislation all employers of five or more employees are required to have a written statement of their health and safety policy. There is no statutory prescription as to the content of the policy, but the need for and the terms of such a policy are intended to ensure that the employer has a clearly defined understanding of what his health and safety responsibilities and goals should be.

Individual Church of Scotland Congregations are distinct employers. This circular contains a form of basic policy document which has been designed to fit their needs. It largely consists of a statement of general principles which Financial Boards should be following. Church premises are, or should be, low-risk environments, and health and safety requirements (particularly risk assessments) should be straightforward enough to be applied by office-bearers without any specialised knowledge or training. It is critical that regular risk assessments (including fire risks) be carried out and recorded in addition to adopting a health and safety policy. Again, in the congregational environment these should be well within the scope of the ordinary layman.

A leaflet *Five Steps to Risk Assessment* is available from the Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk (In the Search box for Health and Safety topics on the right, select “Risk management”).

So far as fire safety assessments are concerned, please see the documentation referred to in the Law Department’s circular Health and Safety and Fire Safety General which is available from the Church of Scotland website (see below).

Further advice is given in the general Health & Safety circular. Advice on the requirements of the Regulations covering the management of asbestos is contained in the circular issued in April 2003. There is also a circular on Gas Safety. Copies of these can be obtained through the Church of Scotland website: www.churchofscotland.org.uk (click on link on right to “Extranet area” then Law Department circulars).

It is strongly recommended that this policy statement (or a variant of it adapted to the needs of a particular congregation) be adopted by all congregations regardless of their number of employees. A copy should be displayed along with the poster referred to in the aforementioned general circular.

Finally, there is a separate, optional section which covers particular rules that may have to be applied to the use of hall premises by outside groups. Whether this section will be required will depend on the nature and use made of the particular congregation’s accommodation. Such rules do not need to be part of the policy statement and could be issued as a separate document to hall

users or referred to in any letting agreement. Clearly, it is important that all users are aware of their fire safety responsibilities.

DRAFT/...

DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT

This is the Health & Safety Policy Statement of []
Church of Scotland Congregation.

The general policy of the [*Financial Board*] of []
Congregation is:

- to provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from all of the Congregation's activities;
- to consult with employees and any other relevant persons on matters affecting their health and safety;
- to provide and maintain safe plant and equipment;
- to ensure safe handling and use of substances;
- to provide information, instruction and supervision for employees, where required;
- to ensure all employees are competent to do their tasks, and to give them adequate training, if necessary;
- to prevent accidents, so far as reasonably possible;
- to maintain safe and healthy working conditions and premises

RESPONSIBILITIES/...

RESPONSIBILITIES & RISK ASSESSMENT

Responsibility for health and safety matters rests with *[insert Financial Board or Property Committee]* which will carry out regular risk assessments (including fire safety assessments) for all of the Congregation’s properties. The *[Property Convener or some other Office Bearer]* shall be responsible for dealing with health and safety matters arising on a day to day basis. Employees, volunteers and those using the Halls should take appropriate steps to protect their own health and safety and all potential risks or concerns should be reported to the *[]* as soon as possible.

ACCIDENTS & FIRST AID

- A first aid box is kept at *[]*
- All accidents and case of work-related ill health will be recorded in an Accident Book. The book is kept by *[]*
- The *[]* is responsible for reporting accidents to the Local Authority where there is an obligation to do so.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire and Evacuation

The *[Financial Board or Property Committee]* is responsible for ensuring that fire risk assessments are undertaken and implemented and that appropriate fire safety measures and evacuation procedures are in place.

MANAGEMENT OF ASBESTOS

The *[Financial Board or Property Committee]* has put in place an appropriate asbestos risk-management plan and will ensure that it is kept up to date.

.....

** optional*

USE OF HALLS

All users of Halls, particularly non-Congregational groups, and the leaders thereof are reminded that they are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that their activities are safe and the persons that they are responsible for are not subject to risk. In particular all users and leaders should be aware of fire safety procedures. The following rules will apply to use of the Halls. Group leaders and members of groups are required to comply with these rules as a condition of using the Halls:-

