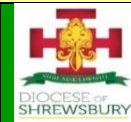


Easter Services and Vigil: Safe Management



Purpose of the Guidance

As churches are beginning to plan the celebration of Holy Week and Easter, during this planning stage, one of the most important things to consider is the number of people who will be in attendance. Take a moment to revisit the safety plan you have established for your church. Ensure the increased capacity of people attending does not breach your Fire Risk Assessment. With so many people in attendance, it is especially important to make sure that you have a safety plan for the services and that the plan is clearly communicated to staff, stewards and volunteers. Below are some details for your consideration

Weather Conditions

Weather is a factor in the safety of our services and particular precautions need to be taken if there are high winds forecast for the Saturday night services. Equally, wet weather will present a different set of issues that you will need to consider and make suitable arrangements to ensure that floors do not become slippery.

If a dawn service is planned, particularly if it is at a remote location then full cognizance must be taken of the likely impact of inclement weather on the service.

Internal and external lighting should be checked and fully functioning. For the Easter Vigil it would be prudent if at least some of the stewards had flashlights with them in case of emergencies.

Stewarding

Know your maximum occupancy. Going over this number **will** be in breach of your Fire Risk Assessment and can pose a risk in the event of an emergency and can make for a crowded and uncomfortable service. Therefore, we need to be vigilant in relation to occupancy and numbers and consider additional arrangements to prevent this from happening, such as:

- Using church halls as overspill areas
- Providing covered areas (gazebos) outside
- Encourage parishioners to attend mass at different times (where possible) to spread the load of attendees at each mass
- Refresh wardens/stewards in relation to occupancy and numbers

At each of the services adequate numbers of stewards are required to direct and manage the increased numbers attending the services.

Stewards should be briefed beforehand and there should be a chief steward who can competently direct operations and who is free to attend to unforeseen matters. Ensure your stewards are fully brief in relation to the increased capacity and of evacuation from additional venues if they are in use.

Care should be taken not to block aisles with additional seating and as far as possible to maintain free movement around the body of the church, safe routes of entrance and egress must be kept clear at all times.

Provision should be made as far as practically possible for parishioners who have mobility problems to occupy seating in the body of the church so that routes to and from the altar and to the exit doors are not blocked with wheelchairs or motability scooters.

Prepare a fire evacuation procedure and ensure all Stewards are fully aware of it and their specific role in it. The Priest and Chief Steward should make arrangements to ensure that in the event of an emergency all the congregation follow the instructions given to them by the Stewards.

Announcement at the beginning of Mass, should be made, to briefly outline the procedures in place with special attention to the escape routes and distribution of communion.

Good Friday

The veneration of the Cross needs to be considered with some care. As far as possible the Cross should be positioned so that people do not have to kneel or bend excessively if they are infirmed. The Cross needs to be securely fixed or held during the veneration. Whilst it is not practical to purify the Cross completely after each person has venerated, reasonable precautions are possible with regard to the nature and type of purifier used. It may also be considered appropriate for the Cross to venerated as last year by a genuflection or a bow.

Easter Vigil

The specific issues raised by the Easter Vigil services are addressed in the page following this note. The risk assessment form attached is provided to assist you in preparing your risk assessment for this service. Any 'good practice' control measures not already in place should be addresses in the 'Action's Required Plan'

Parking

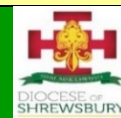
Complete a walkthrough of your parking areas and outdoor walking surfaces for any potential hazards, for both day and night time conditions, including potholes, loose handrails or inadequate lighting.

Increased numbers attending the Holy Week and Easter Masses will create additional parking issues and consideration should be given to providing additional stewards, wearing appropriate 'Hi Vis' jackets, to assist in safe and considerate parking. It is essential at all services not just at Easter to consider how an emergency vehicle could attend the church in the case of a 999 call being made.

Security

It is to be hoped that there are enhanced offerings over the Easter period and it is therefore prudent to review arrangements for the counting and safe storage of cash until banking can take place.

Risk Assessment - Easter Vigil



Typical hazards associated with this activity

Fire
Burns

Slips, trips & falls

Good practice risk control measures to consider

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> An individual or group is put in charge of planning the management of health & safety for the event <input type="checkbox"/> At the start of the service as far as possible the lights in the church should not be turned off until the congregation has gathered. <input type="checkbox"/> The place chosen for the Service of Light fire is in the open air & clear of combustible & flammable materials <input type="checkbox"/> The place chosen for the Service of Light is in an area where people can gather around it safely <input type="checkbox"/> The container for the fire is of a non-combustible material such as a metal urn or brazier <input type="checkbox"/> Dry kindling is used to light the fire rather than dowsing it with a flammable liquid <input type="checkbox"/> Someone is made responsible for remaining with, & for extinguishing the fire <input type="checkbox"/> A fire blanket & water type of fire extinguisher are kept close to hand <input type="checkbox"/> A suitable alternative location is chosen for the Service of Light in the event of inclement weather. This takes account of any increased fire hazards by placing the fire near to, or inside, any building <input type="checkbox"/> Purpose made hand held candles are used with proper slide-on drip trays for those who are taking part in the candlelit procession <input type="checkbox"/> Stewards guide the procession into the Church <input type="checkbox"/> Children holding candles are closely supervised <input type="checkbox"/> The Paschal Candle is placed in a metal holder which is on a non-combustible surface & clear of combustible displays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Agree beforehand on when the hand-held candles should be extinguished, & how they will be collected to ensure that none are left unattended <input type="checkbox"/> A specific steward is appointed to each door & is required to check that it opens easily before the service starts <input type="checkbox"/> The maximum capacity of the church is not exceeded. Additional venues or suitable outside areas used to accommodate additional attendees. <input type="checkbox"/> Stewards have been fully briefed on the increased capacity and the controls in place to reduce any additional associated risks <input type="checkbox"/> Stewards have torches so that any minor problems can be dealt with without bringing on the main lights. In the event of a fire or other serious emergency the main lights are brought on immediately <input type="checkbox"/> Fire extinguishers are allocated to specific stewards, who know how to use them <input type="checkbox"/> For large services, a trained first-aider with first aid equipment is available <input type="checkbox"/> The person leading the service is aware of the fire risk, and in the event of an emergency be ready to ask everyone to leave in an orderly fashion following the directions of the stewards, including from any additional venues in use. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a pre-designated place of safety for the congregation to evacuate to in the event of an emergency, away from the building |
|---|--|

Having reviewed the above in the context of the activity you are assessing, use the space below to record any actions that are needed for safety – (also state if OK & no action needed)

Responsibility & target date

Groups/people affected:

Signature of person responsible for this activity confirming that this risk assessment has been carried out with the relevant people

Signed:

Date:

Print:

Approval by the Person in charge of area/Head of Department/Senior Manager (please indicate which)

Signed:

Date:

Print: