

EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE IRELAND

GUIDELINE No. 07: Management of Fire Safety

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1.0 Introduction

This document is intended as an introduction to the subject matter and not a substitute for advice in respect of a specific building. In terms of fire safety, every person having control over church buildings has responsibilities under two significant pieces of legislation:

Building Control Act, 1990 (as amended)

All new buildings, extensions and material alterations commenced on or after 1 June 1992 are required to comply with the Building Control Act, 1990 (as amended) together with the Building Regulations, 1991 (as amended) and the Building Control Regulations, 1991 (as amended).

Given the significant nature of the responsibilities involved advice should be obtained from a person registered under Parts 3 or 5 of the Building Control Act, 2007 or a chartered engineer.

Fire Services Act, 1981 (as amended)

This Act makes provision for matters which include for fire safety and the protection and rescue of persons and property. Section 18(2) of this Act states:

'It shall be the duty of every person having control over premises to which this section applies

- (a) *To take all reasonable measures to guard against the outbreak of fire...*
- (b) *To provide reasonable fire safety measures and prepare and provide appropriate fire safety procedures for ensuring the safety of persons*



- (c) *ensure that the fire safety measures and procedures are applied at all times*
- (d) *ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of persons on the premises in the event of an outbreak of fire.*

In terms of compliance with the above, every person having control over a church premises is advised to follow the Code of Practice for the Management of Fire Safety in Places of Assembly published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. This Code of Practice provides for matters which include the following:

2.0 Fire Safety Manager

A responsible person should be designated as Fire Safety Manager for the implementation and overseeing of the fire safety programme.

3.0 Fire Safety Programme

A fire safety programme should be devised and undertaken. A sufficient number of appropriately-trained personnel should be present when the premises are open to the public to ensure the implementation of the programme.

Details of the fire safety programme should be noted in a Fire Safety Register (see section 3.8 below). The fire safety programme should include the following elements.

3.1 Fire Prevention Measures

Prevent an outbreak of fire by establishing day-to-day fire prevention practices including:-

- Do not allow rubbish and waste materials to accumulate.
- Check electrical and gas appliances regularly.
- Inspect upholstered seating regularly and repair or remove any seating that has exposed filling material before the public are admitted to the premises.
- Do not allow fire resistant doors to be wedged open.
- Avoid using portable gas and liquid fuel heaters.
- Ensure that members of the public do not enter any restricted areas.
- Inspect the premises immediately after the public has vacated the building to remove any potential fire hazard.

3.2 Training Personnel

Personnel with specific duties should be given appropriate instruction and training for their role. Particulars of such training should be entered into the Fire Safety Register.

Training should include

- Fire prevention measures.
- Emergency procedures and fire and evacuation drills devised for the premises.



- The evacuation plan with special attention to the young, disabled and infirm.
- Arrangements for assisting the fire brigade.
- Fire control techniques.
- Details of the premises including escape routes, location of alarm call points, fire fighting equipment and assembly points.
- Fire and evacuation drills.
- How to inform the public of the procedures in the event of a fire or other emergency.
- Maintenance of escape routes.
- Providing adequate fire protection equipment and systems, and their inspection and maintenance.
- Measures to prevent overcrowding.

3.3 Holding fire and evacuation drills

Regular fire and evacuation drills which simulate emergency procedures should be planned and organised.

- Establish emergency procedures that are appropriate to the premises.
- Hold fire and evacuation drills at varying times simulating different conditions.
- Drills should include the specific actions expected from appropriately trained personnel when a fire breaks out or when there is an alarm.
- Each fire and evacuation drill should be reviewed afterwards and the procedures modified where necessary. These modified procedures should be notified to all the appropriate personnel. There must be a procedure in place for calling the fire brigade.
- Details of all drills and training to be recorded in the Fire Safety Register.

3.4 Informing the public

Members of the public should be made aware of the safety procedures that apply in the event of fire or other emergency. This should take the form of Fire Instruction Notices and / or Safety Announcements as appropriate.

- A **Fire Instruction Notice** is a printed list of instructions for what to do when a fire or other emergency occurs.
- A **Safety Announcement** is a verbal message advising the occupants of the procedures that apply should a fire or other emergency occur.

Emergency announcements advise occupants that a fire or other emergency exists. These announcements should be made in such a way that they are audible in all occupied parts of the premises. Where possible, these announcements should be made in person.



A plan of the building showing each floor should be displayed permanently inside the main entrance where it will be clearly visible to people entering the building.

3.5 Maintaining escape routes

It is essential that all escape routes and exit doors are maintained free from obstruction and immediately available for use while the public are on the premises. Regulations entitled *Fire Safety in Places of Assembly (Ease of Escape), Regulations, 1985*, place a specific duty on those responsible for public buildings to ensure that escape routes are kept clear and that all doors, gates, etc. on these routes and final exits can be opened easily by people using the premises.

Internal and external escape routes should be kept unobstructed and immediately available for use.

Escape routes should be clearly indicated and adequately illuminated.

Fire resistant doors, exit doors, self-closing devices, panic bolts and crash bars should be inspected before the public are admitted to the premises and should be maintained in a useable and fault-free condition.

3.6 Fire protection equipment and systems

Adequate fire protection systems and equipment should be provided in all church buildings.

This equipment may include fire extinguishers, hose reels, rising mains, fire hydrants, emergency lighting, fire detection and alarm systems and sprinkler and ventilation systems. As the protection of the public depends on the reliable operation of this equipment, all such equipment should be inspected and maintained by the appropriate specialist in accordance with the appropriate standards.

All data relating to the inspection, testing and maintenance of fire protection systems and equipment should be recorded in the Fire Safety Register.

3.7 Assisting the fire brigade

The Fire Safety Manager should meet with the fire brigade and provide information on the numbers of occupants, special hazards, entry points to the building and water supplies. The information should include a copy of the plan of the building referred to above.



Access routes should be kept clear for use by fire appliances. Gates and barriers that are likely to obstruct firefighting operations should be kept unlocked or removed when the alarm is raised.

3.8 Fire Safety Register

The person responsible for implementing and overseeing the fire safety programme should keep a Fire Safety Register, in the form set out in Appendix D of the Code of Practice for the Management of Fire Safety in Places of Assembly published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, to record all fire safety matters.

The register should be kept on the premises at all times and should be available for inspection by any authorised officer of the fire brigade.

4.0 Additional Resources

The Code of Practice for the Management of Fire Safety in Places of Assembly may be found at: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Community/FireandEmergencyServices> (under Guidance Documents).

