

Melbourn United Reformed Church

Fire Risk Assessment

FRA 1 - Use of Church Hall

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Approved by:.....
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(On behalf of the Elders)

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(reviewed October 2019 - no changes required)

Fire Risk Assessment FRA 1

Use of Church Hall by Third Parties (Church Sanctuary Normally Closed)

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1. Introduction

The format of the original Fire Risk Assessments (completed in 2007) identified any risks, recommended actions to mitigate them, recorded actions placed by the Elders in respect of the recommendations and recorded the date when such actions were completed. These are retained in our archives for record purposes.

The format of **this** Fire Risk Assessment, which has been conducted to update the document in light of current usage and changes to equipment in the intervening period, records fire risks and the measures currently in place to mitigate them. Any recommendations for further risk reduction measures are recorded at the end of the "Risk Reduction Measures" section.

Fire Risk Assessments are primarily about people and their safety - not about protecting the building. Where there are issues regarding the latter that arise as a result of this assessment they will, however, be noted.

2. Preamble

This Risk Assessment deals with use of our Church Hall primarily by third parties although much of the following is applicable if the Hall is being used by Church Members or for Church functions.

There are generally two different groups of persons who use the Hall, namely:

- a) those who use the hall on a regular basis who are entrusted with their own keys to open and close the premises and for whom no-one representing the Church need be present at any time and
- b) those who use the hall on an irregular or singular basis where a "Church Key Holder" (someone representing the Church) is present to both open the premises and explain where things are at the beginning of the period of hire and close the premises at the end of the period of hire.

3. Current Assessment

3.1 Potential Sources of Ignition

- i) The hall is heated by electric wall mounted convector heaters along each of the long walls, individually fused as well as a main fuse in the Main Fusebox / Store and controlled by a room thermostat. There is also a similar heater in the entrance hall similarly controlled. In each of the Toilets there is a small "froststat" heater also individually fused.
The main hall heaters are situated on the long walls of the hall. On the long side with windows they are situated immediately beneath the windows the curtains of which are usually drawn closed when the hall is not in use. They come close to the top surface of these heaters. All the aforementioned heaters may be switched on automatically when the hall is not occupied and the temperature falls below a predetermined level.

- ii) Within the Servery there is a fixed water heater (situated beneath the draining board) controlled by a switch to the left of the draining board. There is a plinth fan heater separately fused and controlled by switches above the work surface. An electric kettle is also available to users of the hall. An extractor fan is situated on the outer wall.
- iii) The main electricity supply enters the building in the Main Fusebox / Store.

3.2 Sources of Fuel

- i) The only obvious source of fuel is held within the Groundsman's Store. This room is always kept locked except when in use. Only a small volume of petrol (<5 litres) is held here and, apart from an electric light, there is no potential source of ignition.

3.3 Alarms & Escape Routes

The hall is a modern building (constructed in 1996) and, as such, conforms to modern practices for fire safety.

- i) There is no electrical fire warning or alarm system within the hall area.
- ii) A Hall Evacuation Plan showing the location of the fire exits and Point of Assembly is posted in the Entrance Lobby and the main area of the hall.
- iii) Exits from the main hall are at each end and are signed giving two distinct options for escape in the event of a fire - one through the normal entry route and one at the other end, passing through a small lobby, in which is the entrance to the Groundsman's Store, to a "panic bolt" outward opening door leading to the outside of the hall and on into the Burial Ground area. The emergency exit signs at each end of the hall are of the photoluminescent type.
- iv) Exits from the Servery and Toilets are situated close to the normal main entrance with an alternative route through the main hall for use in exceptional circumstances.

3.4 People

- i) People of different ages and abilities use the hall. Ages range from infants to nonagenarians.

3.5 Other Issues

- i) A foam fire extinguisher (primarily for use on liquid fires and not suitable for electrical fires) is situated within the main body of the hall. This is checked regularly by Chubb Fire Protection.
- ii) Hirers of the hall receive a copy of the "Church Hall Terms and Conditions" together with a "Church Hall Booking Form" which they are required to complete and return to the Hall Booking Secretary.
- iii) No means of communication to the outside world for alerting the relevant services in the case of an emergency is provided by the Church.

4. Risk Reduction Measures

4.1 Potential Sources of Ignition

- i) The Main Fusebox / Store, whilst capable of being locked, has a notice clearly displayed stating that the door should be left unlocked. The key provided to "Regular Users" of the Hall is not capable of locking this door.

4.2 Sources of Fuel

- i) Although the small quantity of fuel is adjacent to one of the fire exits, should a fire occur at that end of the building use of the other fire exit at the opposite end of the hall would be obvious.

4.3 Alarms & Escape Routes

- i) The main hall area is reasonably self-contained and the outbreak of a fire in any area is likely to be detected by the persons present and a warning shouted in time to effect a safe evacuation.

- ii) The main hall entrance acts as one of the emergency fire exits and is therefore checked for proper operation each time the hall is used. The other exit at the far end of the hall from the servery with the “panic” bolt is checked on a fortnightly basis as part of the normal weekly Opening Procedure by the Duty Elder and recorded on the Check Sheet located in the Vestry.

4.4 People

- i) Age, and more especially ability, may affect the speed at which evacuation of the hall can be safely accomplished. The Terms and Conditions, which all hirers sign to say they have read, are clear that the hirer is responsible at all times for ensuring the safety of persons attending the function and to summon the appropriate emergency services should the need arise.

4.5 Other Issues

- i) A copy of the Hall Evacuation Plan is sent to regular users (i.e. those who are entrusted with their own key).
For irregular users the Church Key Holder responsible for opening the hall at the beginning of the period of hire is charged with the responsibility to point out the Hall Evacuation Plan and the position of the fire exits.
- ii) The vast majority of groups will have a least one person with a mobile phone with which they can summon the emergency services should the need arise. Hirers are advised on the Booking Form (which they have to sign) that there is no telephone at the Church and that the Church recommends that they have access to a mobile phone for use in case of emergency.

(BGM 4th July 2017)