

Church fire guidance

Use of candles in church services



The use of candles in church can be an important part of worship. However, it is important to remember that they can be the cause of major fires and serious injuries if not used correctly. Simple precautions should mean that candles can be used safely.

Choice of candle

Good-quality, slow-burning candles are best. Cheaper, catering-quality candles will burn down quickly, and the flame may soon get dangerously close to foliage or decorations.

Hand-held candles

Great care needs to be taken where people are given candles to hold, especially where large numbers are involved. Apart from the risk of igniting flammable materials, molten wax can cause damage to clothing and is very hot. Purpose-made candles are available, and should be used with proper slide-on card drip trays.

Even greater care is necessary where children are involved. Children should be properly supervised and care taken to ensure that they do not stand too close together and, in particular, not too close behind one another as there is a risk of both clothing and hair being set alight. Processions while holding candles are probably best avoided.

Placing of candles

Candles must be kept clear of all combustible materials including flammable decorations, foliage and electrical equipment. Ideally, candles should be placed in metal holders on non-combustible surfaces such as stone or brick.

Fire extinguishers

Fire extinguishers must always be readily available where candles are being used. Water extinguishers are the most suitable for dealing with burning foliage, paper and wood. Church members must know where the extinguishers are and how to use them. Training can be provided either by your fire extinguisher supplier or the local Fire and Rescue Service. Water should not be used on electrical equipment.

Fire blanket

A fire blanket may be a better way of dealing with certain fire situations, and you should have at least one available. They are particularly suitable for dealing with burning clothing.

Means of escape

If a fire should start, you must be certain that people can get out of the building quickly. All doors must be unlocked and be capable of being opened quickly.

Lighting

Stewards should have torches so that any minor problems can be dealt with, without turning on the main lights. In the event of a fire or other serious emergency, the main lights must be turned on immediately.

Procedures

It is strongly recommended that a team of stewards is appointed and that each person has specific duties in accordance with a list of written procedures. A specific steward should be appointed to each door and must ensure that it opens easily before the service starts.

Similarly fire extinguishers should be allocated to specific stewards, who should know how to use them. For large services, a trained first aider with first aid equipment should be available.

Announcements

The person leading the service should be 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.

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We may monitor or record calls to improve our service.

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