



RISK

MANAGEMENT

MODULE 4

BUILDING ENVIRONMENT 3
WORK AREAS, PLAYGROUNDS,
FIRST AID, BUILDING ACCESS

MAXIMISING MINISTRY BY MINIMISING HARM

RISK MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth module in the Parish Risk Management Program. It needs to be read and applied in the light of the previous introductory sections – ‘**A Risk Management Program for Parishes**’ (Overview) and ‘**Developing a Risk Management Plan**’ (Plan). In particular the Overview contains an high level outline of the obligations applicable under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW) and introduces some of the terminology used in this and other Modules of the Program.

This module looks at the risks and issues involved with:

- Working environment
- Amenities for staff and volunteers
- Facilities for the aged and people with a disability
- Safe work procedures
- Manual handling and storage
- Working at heights
- Use and maintenance of equipment
- Injuries to employees
- First Aid
- Workplace consultation
- Safe playgrounds
- “Working bees”
- Working from home

What is Risk?

For our purposes, a risk or hazard is anything which potentially puts at risk:

- The health, safety and welfare of your ministry team (both paid and volunteers), contractors or anyone else who is a worker, members of the congregation, visitors, adults and children.
- The good order of our property or equipment.
- Our financial well being.
- Our reputation and relationships with people inside and outside of our parish.

“A parish has a general duty of care to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work.”

This module takes another step toward complying with current Work Health and Safety legislative requirements.

If you have already done work on these areas, this is designed to complement that work. Please check that you have covered all the subject matter discussed in this module and give appropriate attention to any outstanding items.

Reminder: A parish has a duty to care for all of its people. According to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 a person conducting a business or undertaking (**PCBU**) must, so far as is reasonably practicable (refer to page 6 of the module Program for Parishes), ensure the health and safety of all workers (including volunteers) while working for your parish and the health and safety of other persons is not put at risk from work carried out at the workplace. A workplace is any place where activities are carried out for your parish and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while working for you. A worker must take reasonable care for their own health and safety, take reasonable care so that their acts and omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others, and comply with instructions, policies and procedures relating to work health and safety.

Steps 3 to 7 of the Risk Management Plan

Please refer to the section in the Parish Risk Management kit entitled '**Developing a Risk Management Plan**'. You will need to apply steps 3 to 7 with regard to the matters covered in this module.

The Steps are:

3. Identify the risks
4. Analyse the risks identified
5. Evaluate the risks
6. Treat and control the risks
7. Review and monitor

For specific details please refer to the relevant section in '**Developing a Risk Management Plan**'.

Please note: some of the subjects covered in this module are related, rather than being separate issues. For example, Manual Handling, Safe Work Procedures and Working at Heights have many common elements.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

This section concerns the physical conditions under which people work and carry out ministry activities on our site(s). While the principles apply to all who carry out ministry, they particularly apply to those who are spending a large number of hours each week on our site(s).

We must seek to ensure that the physical conditions under which our people work are both conducive to their good health and contribute to the effectiveness of their ministry. In the excitement of an expanding Gospel ministry, it is all too easy to take on an additional staff member, without providing the appropriate physical environment, which includes desks, chairs, heating, cooling, air circulation, lighting etc.

"We must seek to ensure that the physical conditions under which our people work are both conducive to their good health and contribute to the effectiveness of their ministry."

Working space

Sufficient work space is to be provided to enable a person to safely and effectively carry out their work. For those who need a desk for their work, it will relate to the size of the desk, access to the desk, proximity of other people and furniture. Most people need "personal space" to be happy at work, so it is important to be sensitive to each person's preferences and accommodate their wishes where practical.

Access to and from their work area must be free of anything that has to be stepped over or squeezed past. Floors and surfaces that people walk on are to be maintained in good condition to minimise the risk of slips, trips and falls.

Ergonomics

Ergonomics is essentially fitting work to people, by designing or arranging workplaces, equipment, products and systems to suit the people who use them and to minimise workplace injury or ill health. It may be that simple changes will bring this about and will increase productivity and morale.

In a parish situation this is most likely to apply to those who work in the office and particularly on a computer. Consider such things as:

- The height of the chair for the person and in relation to the desk.
- The angle of the back of the chair and lumbar support.
- Ensuring the computer screen is at the right height and distance to enable viewing in comfort.
- Documents being at the right height and angle – perhaps a document holder is necessary.
- Taking frequent breaks by looking away from the screen, preferably into the distance, or getting up to do other things.
- After the first week of employment of a new worker, they should be asked to complete the 'Office Ergonomic Guidelines' checklist available on the University of Sydney web site <http://sydney.edu.au/whs/docs/ohsrm/WorkHomeChecklist.pdf>

RISK MANAGEMENT

Lighting

Adequate lighting is required to enable a person to carry out their role in comfort. Consider the availability of natural light and the brightness of the lighting. Is glare and reflection or working in shadow an issue? If the available natural light and overhead lighting is not adequate or not in the right place, it may be necessary to supplement with a desk lamp.

Ventilation and clean air

Fresh, clean air is vital for a person to be able to function effectively. Ensure that ventilation is appropriate for the person's comfort and allows for changes in temperature. It may be necessary to rearrange or redirect air conditioning ducts to provide adequate fresh air or to remove drafts.

Heat and cold

Provision needs to be made for varying temperatures throughout the year. If the office is air conditioned, then hopefully a temperature can be set which will be suitable to all the people in the area. If there is no air conditioning, then it may be necessary to supplement air flow with fans in warmer weather and to provide heating during cooler times.

Please ensure that portable fans and heaters are in good condition, that power boards and leads are not overloaded or damaged and that trips hazards are not created.

Noise

Please refer to Module 2 for general information about noise. Besides dangerously loud noise, be aware of noise that can create distraction and stress as a person tries to carry out their role, particularly if they are working to a deadline. Such noise could be from machinery and equipment, childrens' activities, other people's conversations or general office chatter.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted inside any public parish building, including churches, halls and offices. The parish should declare buildings to be smoke free zones and erect signage which:

- contains the smoking prohibited symbol with a diameter of at least 90mm
- contains the words 'NO SMOKING' in letters of at least 20mm in height
- contains a reference to the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000
- are in appropriate numbers and areas so that they are likely to be seen at public entrances to buildings

Note: It will be a parish policy decision whether smoking outside parish buildings (such as car parks and playgrounds) is permitted when any workers, contractors, parishioners, children or visitors are present. The presence of smoke, particularly where there are children and those who may have respiratory problems, offers a remote potential of legal liability.

AMENITIES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Amenities means facilities provided for the welfare and personal hygiene of workers. They include toilets, rest rooms, seating, dining area and drinking water. For people who are carrying out manual work, such as grounds maintenance, amenities may need to include a change room, locker and washing facilities.

Consideration needs to be given to the composition of the "workforce" and adequate provision made for the balance of males and females using the amenities.

An adequate number of clean, hygienic toilets / rest rooms is required, giving appropriate privacy. The number of toilets / rest rooms will depend upon the number of people involved (1 per 20 males, 1 per 15 females). In situations with only a few people (say less than 10) unisex facilities may be provided,

consisting of toilet, washbasin and a means of disposing of personal sanitary items. (Reference – [Managing the Work Environment and Facilities Code of Practice 2011](#))

Staff and volunteers need to be provided with hygienic facilities for eating their meals and preparing and storing food. This includes access to a sink, facilities to boil water, a clean cupboard, refrigerator and access to clean drinking water. In many cases the kitchen in the parish hall may be the appropriate place if it is conveniently located to where people are working and other activities in the hall do not prevent them from using the facilities. Other cases may require a “kitchenette” near the work area.

FACILITIES FOR THE AGED AND PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

As part of our love and care for all people we need to look at how we can provide access to our facilities for the aged and people with a disability.

It may be necessary to make some changes to existing buildings, walkways and drives to enable everyone to move freely around the parish’s site(s). This may involve:

- ramps over/beside stairs
- widening doorways
- consideration of the weight of doors to open – particularly doors with a door closing mechanism
- handrails on stairs, ramps, slopes and in toilets
- smoothing pathways
- removing obstacles

“Our Sunday meetings, and many other ministry activities, are open to the public which means we have an obligation to provide adequate access for all.”

Under the provisions of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability in providing access to or use of premises that the public can enter and use. Our Sunday meetings, and many other ministry activities, are open to the public which means we have an obligation to provide adequate access for all where practicable. There is, however, an exception where to do so would constitute ‘unjustifiable hardship’. Whether unjustifiable hardship would be experienced will depend on the facts of the particular case but the following factors are taken into account:

- the benefit or detriment that is likely to be suffered by the person in question or the person required to provide access;
- the effect of the disability on the person concerned; and
- the financial circumstances and the estimated amount of expenditure required to be made.

Even if the provision of a particular means of access would constitute unjustifiable hardship, the authorities would want to see that it was considered and that plans were made for financing the project in the future if feasible. It is often the case that there are some less costly changes that could be made to improve accessibility and that these changes would not constitute unjustifiable hardship.

Plans for new buildings and buildings undergoing major renovation are required to include access for the aged and disabled under the Building Code of Australia. It is unlikely that a local council would issue a construction certificate for a building that the public can enter and use that did not include provision for disabled access.

You should obtain professional advice from an architect or builder, particularly for ramps and handrails, which are to comply with various regulations. If you have a heritage property, consult your heritage architect so that they can advise on any heritage issues that need to be taken into account.

[If you have any concerns about your legal obligations to those with a disability, please contact the Legal Services division of SDS for guidance. The Manager, Legal Services can be contacted on 02 9265 1647.](#)

SAFE WORK PROCEDURES

There may be a number of tasks to be carried out from time to time which require a safe work procedure to be developed. For example, changing high level light bulbs and cleaning and maintenance work.

Steps to be taken:

- Carry out a job safety analysis by breaking each task down into steps.
- Identify potential risks and hazards.
- Eliminate reasonably foreseeable risks to health or safety, or control those risks where elimination is not reasonably practicable.

RISK MANAGEMENT

- Determine the best way to carry out the task safely.
- Document in the Safe Work Procedure Register (refer page 13).
- Provide training and supervision as appropriate to ensure that the procedures are followed.
- Review from time to time and adjust the procedure if there is a variation in the task.
- Observe from time to time to ensure that the procedure is being followed.

MANUAL HANDLING AND STORAGE

Parish life usually involves a certain amount of manual handling, such as moving and stacking chairs and tables, moving equipment in and out of storage, or handling stationery supplies. All too often people suffer injury, which may be from one incident, or caused by a repeated activity over a period of time. Any injury brings personal suffering and affects ministry.

A hazardous manual task is a task that requires a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any person, animal or thing that involves 1 or more of the following:

- repetitive or sustained force;
- high or sudden force;
- repetitive movement;
- sustained or awkward posture;
- exposure to vibration.

“Any injury brings personal suffering and affects ministry.”

These factors directly stress the body and can lead to a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD).

What is required to manage the risk of musculoskeletal disorders?

Parishes must manage risks to health and safety relating to a musculoskeletal disorder associated with a hazardous manual task.

Work practices and the equipment and containers that are used are to be, as far as is workable, without risk to health and safety.

List the manual handling tasks

- Make a list of the manual handling tasks that are carried out during a full week or on special occasions. Consider worship services, groups who meet at various times and the office.
- Have there been injuries in the past caused by manual handling – what were they, how did they happen and how could they have been avoided?
- What has to be moved, from where to where, how far and how often?
- Who has to move it and how suitable are they for the task?
- Talk to those who will regularly be handling items to see what they think the potential risks are and appropriate ways to handle items.

How is the task being carried out – is there a better way?

- Do people have to bend, twist, stretch or reach above their shoulders?
- Are the items stored in the correct sized containers for people to move without undue strain?
- Would handles or other grips make the task easier?
- Are the items stored below waist level or above shoulder level?
- Is a mechanical aid available? e.g., a trolley
- Is a stable, good quality step ladder available?
- Could the work area be redesigned to make the handling easier, such as benches or storage at more appropriate heights?
- Is there sufficient space to move the items freely without resorting to awkward movement?
- Should you move some items to off-site storage, carry out archiving or clean out old files?
- Are people advised to share a lifting task when necessary?

Who is doing the task?

- What is their age?
- How fit are they and how physically suited to the task?
- Should the task be restructured so that there is less risk of injury to the person who is actually doing it?

Training and supervision

- Provide training as required. It may not be obvious how to use the equipment or to carry out the task most effectively and with the least risk of injury.
- There needs to be a reasonable level of supervision of manual tasks, particularly when a person is new to the task. However, some ongoing supervision is also required to ensure that poor practices, which could lead to injury, do not develop over time.
- Part of training and supervision is seeking to ensure that good posture is used in all manual tasks. This is closely aligned with ergonomics covered under 'Working Environment'.
- Some manual tasks need to involve more than one person and should not be allowed to proceed unless the correct number of people are present.
- Wherever possible people should not have to lift or retrieve anything above their shoulder height. If it is necessary to store above shoulder height, ensure that a stable, good quality step ladder is available and items are no heavier than the person can lift, on the ladder, without strain (refer to working at heights section).
- Consider seeking guidance from someone such as a physiotherapist on how to safely carry out the various tasks.
- The *National Code of Practice for Manual Handling [NOHSC:2005 (1990)]* gives the following weights as a guide:
 - In seated work, it is advisable not to lift loads in excess of 4.5kg
 - In a standing position, it is advisable to keep the load below or between 16-20kg
 - Generally, no person should be required to lift, lower or carry loads above 55kg, unless mechanical assistance or team lifting arrangements are provided
 - For those under the age of 18 years, a load of under 16kg is required

The National Code of Practice for the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders from performing manual task at work 2007 and National Standard for Manual tasks 2007 provide further guidance on this topic.

WORKING AT HEIGHTS

Working at heights presents particular dangers and the Managing the Risk of Falls at Workplaces Code of Practice provides specific guidelines and requirements.

Generally, working on roofs is especially dangerous as they may be made of slippery or fragile material (e.g., slate) and the steeper the roof, the greater the danger.

Do not allow inexperienced persons or volunteers to access the roof. Where work on the roof needs to be done, only engage appropriately qualified tradespeople. Injury or death is not worth the saving in money!

The same applies to work which involves someone being 2 metres or more above the ground. For example, replacing light bulbs, ceiling fans etc., in the church or the hall. It will be far more appropriate to bring in a qualified tradesperson than risk the health and wellbeing of volunteers or employees who are not specifically qualified for the work.

Use of ladders

When using portable ladders below a height of 2 metres above the ground, please consider the following for controlling potential risks:

1. Use the correct ladder for the job by considering the duration of the task, the physical conditions surrounding where the task is to be performed and the weather conditions where the task is to be performed.
2. Use only industrial ladders – do not use domestic ladders.
3. Examine ladders for defects and damage before use.
4. Ladders should have a load rating of more than 120kg
5. Ladders should be adequately supported at the base.

RISK MANAGEMENT

6. Make sure the ladder is in the correct position by placing ladders at a slope of 4:1 (i.e., if the ladder is 4 metres long, the base is to be 1 metre out from whatever it is leaning against), securing ladders at top/bottom or both ends if necessary (or held firmly by another person), and placing them on a solid, stable surface
7. Ladders should extend at least one metre above the access level.
8. Clean off footwear and ladder rungs before using the ladder.
9. Wear slip resistant footwear when using ladders.
10. Use both hands to hold on when climbing ladders
11. Climb and descend facing the ladder maintaining three points of contact with the hands gripping the stiles or each rung.
12. Do not carry anything in your hands when climbing or descending
13. Always face the ladder when climbing
14. Never use ladders in bad/windy conditions
15. Never use ladders that are damaged or in bad condition
16. A ladder should not be “walked” by the person standing on the ladder.
17. One person on a ladder at a time with three body limbs on the ladder at all times.
18. Do not climb higher than the third rung from the top of the ladder.
19. Only work on a job within easy arm’s reach from the ladder.
20. Ladders (other than trestle ladders) should not be used to support planks as a work platform.
21. Metal ladders or wire reinforced ladders must not be used where electrical hazards exist.
22. Never place ladders near power lines
23. Do not place ladders in vehicle or pedestrian traffic areas.
24. Long and heavy ladders (greater than 20kg) should be handled by at least two people.
25. Stepladders should only be used in the fully open position.

Sources: *WorkCover New South Wales: Safe Working at Heights Guide 2006, and Work Health and Safety 2011 Code of Practice: Managing the risk of falls at the workplace*

Scaffolding and similar equipment

If scaffolding or other protective measures (e.g., guardrails) are used to access high work, they must be erected and dismantled by qualified tradespeople with appropriate certificates of competency and insurance cover.

Any work involving safety harnesses, scaffolding and elevated work platforms (e.g., a scissor lift) should only be performed by qualified tradespersons.

There is also the risk of an object falling from a height, so people who are not involved in the work are to be kept away from the work area. Appropriate caution is to be exercised by the people working at height as well as the people working on the ground. When work is being undertaken at a high level, it is important for all people in the work area to wear hard hats.

USE AND MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT

Training

Adequate training should be provided so that people can safely and effectively use the equipment that you have. It may not be wise to assume that it is obvious how a piece of equipment is used.

Training is important to:

- Minimise the risk of harm to the user or bystanders.
- Minimise the risk of damage or excessive wear of the equipment.
- Minimise wastage of material.
- Maximise the work produced in the least time.
- Promote job satisfaction in the user.

“Adequate training should be provided so that people can safely and effectively use the equipment that you have.”

Maintenance

Generally, equipment will work more effectively and last longer if it is correctly maintained. In some cases a regular maintenance program is required, rather than waiting until it breaks or fails. It is highly frustrating for people (volunteers in particular) to come to do a task only to find the equipment is in poor condition or broken.

Any wear and tear or damage that could result in electrical shock or physical harm (such as a frayed extension lead or a guard missing from a mower) must be attended to immediately. The equipment must not be used in a dangerous state.

The schedule included in this module should be used to keep as a maintenance record.

INJURIES TO EMPLOYEES

Please refer to the Incident Notification Procedures supplement to Module 1 regarding the Diocesan notification procedures in the case of notifiable incidents..

In addition to the Incident Report, a Register of Injuries must be kept for all injuries to workers of the parish.

This matter is also covered in the Employment Relations – Guidelines for Parishes issued by SDS Legal Services.

FIRST AID

First Aid is the emergency care of injured or sick people. The aim is to preserve life, assist recovery and prevent the injury or illness becoming worse.

Parishes must ensure the provision of first aid equipment for the workplace, that each worker at the workplace has access to the equipment, and access to facilities for the administration of first aid. An adequate number of workers must also be trained to administer first aid at the workplace, or workers have access to an adequate number of other persons who have been trained to administer first aid.

Proper care of our ministry team, volunteers, congregations and visitors requires us to have a first aid plan in place. Please consider the following:

- The ministries carried out at your site(s). In addition to Sunday services, what other activities are conducted? Children and young people's groups? Are there a large number of elderly people who attend? What about offsite activities? Are your facilities hired or rented to non-church groups?
- How many people (of all ages) normally attend your site(s) and activities?
- What are the likely injuries or illnesses that could occur? Cuts, scrapes, burns, sprains/strains? Asthma, epilepsy, heart attack, hypoglycemia (in a person with diabetes), anaphylactic shock (allergy reaction to substances, such as peanuts)?
- Size and layout of your site. Would one central location for a first aid kit suffice, or should there be several first aid kits at different locations?

Trained First Aiders

It would be ideal to have at least one trained first aider at every activity of the parish. This includes church services and all group activities, both on and off site. Where there are more than 25 people at any event, there is a greater reason to work towards this ideal.

The first step will be to identify parish people who have existing first aid qualifications and would be willing to act as a first aider at church services and/or parish activities. Seek to encourage other congregational members to undertake first aid training, so that they may serve the congregation in this way. Develop a roster to cover as many activities as possible.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Training requirements for First Aiders

Trained first aid personnel means:

- a person who holds a current first aid certificate issued after successful completion of a WorkCover-approved first aid course; or
- a person who holds a current occupational first aid certificate issued after successful completion of a WorkCover-approved occupational first aid course; or
- a level 3 or greater New South Wales ambulance officer; or
- a registered nurse; or
- a medical practitioner.

The Australian Red Cross and St John's Ambulance often run first aid courses for the public to obtain a basic first aid certificate. First aid certificates are usually time limited, so it is important for your first aiders to stay up to date.

First Aid Kits

The size, layout and the activities that occur on various parts of your site will determine how many first aid kits will be necessary. If there are regular off site activities, there should also be at least one kit that can be taken off the site.

Location: where activities take place; easily visible and easily accessible. Not locked away, but still out of reach of children.

Signs: the first aid kit should be clearly identifiable, with a white cross on a green background prominently displayed on the outside. Emergency numbers should be clearly listed beside the kit.

Information: a list of contents should be provided with the kit.

Contents of the kit and where to obtain one: Please refer to the Australian Red Cross www.redcross.org.au or St John Ambulance www.stjohn.org.au, both of whom have a variety of first aid kits available for purchase. They will be able to provide guidance on the number and type of kits that are suitable for your particular situation.

Maintenance: the first aid kit(s) need to be regularly checked (e.g., quarterly) and the contents replenished. It is suggested that one of your first aiders undertakes this task.

First Aid Report

Use the Incident / Accident / Injury register to record any use of a first aid kit (refer Module 1). While many situations may be obviously an accident or injury, it is wise to record any treatment as a result of an incident, particularly involving children. Besides having a proper record for the "patient", there is protection for the person who administered the first aid.

WORKPLACE CONSULTATION

The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 states that a PCBU (i.e. Wardens and the Minister) must, as far as is reasonably practicable, consult with workers who carry out work for the business or undertaking and who are (or are likely to be) directly affected by a health and safety matter.

Step 1 of Developing a Risk Management Plan ('Communicate and Consult') and the sample WH&S Policy in Module 1 will facilitate this process. However, when dealing specifically with workers there will need to be more formality (e.g., the establishment of an WH&S Committee or the appointment of WH&S employee representatives (if required) or other arrangement as agreed by the employer and workers).

The purpose of the consultation is to enable PCBU to share information about risk management with their workers and to hear and give due weight to their views and suggestions.

Consultation needs to take place when risks are initially assessed and in the decision making process to eliminate or control the risks. Staff amenities are to be included in this consultation process.

The importance of consultation

Consultation is a legal requirement and an essential part of managing health and safety risks. A PCBU must consult with workers when:

- identifying hazardous and assessing risks arising from the work carried out or to be carried out;
- making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those risks;
- making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for the welfare of workers;
- proposing changes that may affect the health and safety of workers; and
- making decisions about procedures for consulting with workers, resolving health or safety issues, monitoring health of your workers, monitoring the conditions at the workplace and providing information and training for workers.

By giving your workers an opportunity to raise work health and safety issues and make suggestions about their own health, safety and welfare, you are better placed to meet your own responsibilities in this regard. Ministry staff and employees themselves owe duties to take reasonable steps to prevent risks to health and safety to work by notifying the rector or wardens of anything which may affect the parish's capacity to comply with work health and safety requirements.

Secondly, by giving your workers an opportunity to raise WH&S issues and make suggestions about their own health, safety and welfare, you are better placed to meet your own responsibilities in this regard. Ministry staff and workers themselves owe duties to take reasonable steps to prevent risks to health and safety at work by notifying the rector or wardens of anything which they know may affect the parish's capacity to comply with occupational health and safety requirements.

To what extent should you consult?

The aim of consultation should be to ensure that you have sufficient information to make well-informed decisions and that the workers who may be affected are given a reasonably opportunity to provide their views and understand the reasons for the decisions.

Must consultation be documented? It is recommended you keep records to demonstrate compliance with consultation requirements.

What kind of consultation is best for your workplace? Consideration should be given to how management normally communicates with workers. You may not need to establish separate consultation arrangements if there are regular discussion between managers or supervisors and the workers already in place. There might already be direct discussions as a part of everyday work.

SAFE PLAYGROUNDS

Many parishes have playgrounds for use by children when attending services or other events. Therefore it is important to ensure that they comply with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 4486.1:1997 that deals specifically with playgrounds and that they are maintained in good condition.

There is a high level of injuries to children from playground incidents. Each year about 100,000 children need medical help for a playground injury and about 7,000 require hospitalisation. (Reference - NSW Multicultural Health Communication – March 2005). This means an average of 274 children per day need medical help for a playground injury.

While it may be impossible to prevent all injuries in the playground, it is important to minimise the risks. It is also important to remember that the church may be held responsible for any injuries sustained if the equipment is unsuitable, not in a sound condition or the children are not adequately supervised.

Things to look for when checking the safety of a playground

- Ensure all equipment and surfaces are in good condition.
- Ensure children are supervised at all times by a responsible adult.
- Ensure that children play on equipment that is suitable for their age.
 - Ensure the surface areas around playgrounds are suitable. Any equipment over half a metre high needs pine bark or mulch at least 25cm deep, or rubber / synthetic material specifically designed for playground use. Grass and sand is not suitable for equipment over half a metre high.
 - If using pine bark ensure that no wooden chips have been left in the pine bark.
- Beware of protruding bolts or 'S' hooks, sharp edges or points.
- Ensure that the area is clear of trip hazards such as broken or exposed concrete edges, tree roots, rocks, uneven ground.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Selection and review of playground equipment

- Elevated platforms and ramps must have guardrails in place, in particular barriers should be installed to platforms 50cm or more above ground level.
- Handrails should be installed on all access ramps, stairways, step ladders and bridges on each side to assist children to balance.
- As playgrounds will generally be used by a broad spectrum of ages, the free height of any fall must be no greater than 1.5 metres.
- Surfaces need to extend 2.5 metres beyond the equipment, or in the case of swings, the length of the swing's extension, plus another 2.5 metres.
- Structures more than 1 metre high must be spaced at least 3 metres apart.
- The playground is to be fitted with child-proof gates so that children can not climb over or squeeze through.
- A sun shade to some or all of the play area is recommended.
- Carefully consider the location of the playground. Is it in general view of the parents?
- Consider the availability of drinking water.
- Does it meet the Australian Standard?
- What will be the ages of children using it? If different equipment for different ages, is the equipment far enough apart, so that older children are not likely to harm younger children?
- Ask your local Council if they have any by-laws or guidelines in relation to playgrounds.
- Only purchase equipment from qualified suppliers and have it professionally installed and certified.
- If you have not had your playground equipment professionally installed or inspected in the last 5 years, arrange an inspection through [Kidsafe NSW](#).

Maintenance

- Inspect the equipment on each day that it is used to ensure that the equipment is in good working order. This may be a warden / parish councillor before the first church service of the day, or the leader of a group that children attend and potentially use the playground or some other competent person.
- If pine bark/mulch is used as surface material ensure that it is evenly distributed and replenished as necessary to maintain minimum depth.
- Children or parents must be encouraged to report any fault or hazard.
- Damaged equipment must be removed or rendered unusable.
- A record must be kept of all repairs and all repairs should be carried out by a qualified tradesperson.

Supervision

It is important that children are supervised in a playground by a responsible adult as the lack of supervision is a significant contributor to playground accidents. It would be ideal that the person supervising is trained in first aid.

For further information and guidance on playground safety, please contact Kidsafe NSW Inc. on 02 9845 0890 or visit their website <http://www.kidsafensw.org>

WORKING BEES

Most parishes hold working bees from time to time to clean-up the site and buildings, attend to general maintenance or carry out special projects. Volunteers are involved and may be working alongside paid employees or contractors. The same applies to weekly cleaning and grounds maintenance teams.

The health, safety and welfare of volunteers must be considered in the same way as employees.

- Refer to the previous sections on:
- Manual handling and storage
- Safe work practices
- Working at heights

- Use and maintenance of equipment
- First aid
- The section on 'Noise' in Module 2

Safe clothing

People must wear appropriate clothing for the work to be done, or should not be allowed to commence the task. Depending upon the task, appropriate clothing may include:

- Full shoes or boots
- Hat
- Gloves
- Eye protection
- Ear protection
- Long trousers
- Long sleeved shirt
- Dust mask
- Hard hat
- High visibility / safety shirts

Plan the work to be done

Plan and prioritise the tasks that are to be carried out, considering:

- How will they be carried out?
- What equipment or tools will be required?
- What are the risks in carrying out the tasks and how are those risks going to be minimised and managed on the day?
- Who will carry out each task?
- What qualifications or experience do they have for the task? Are they competent in handling the tools that are required for the task? Can they be adequately trained on the day, or is more training required?
- Who is the trained first aid person(s) who will be in attendance?
- Will adequate water supplies be available?
- Is sunscreen available?
- Who will supervise the day and appoint people to the various tasks?
- Often, the supervisor of the working bee will have to wait until the day to see who turns up and therefore what work can be done. Good planning will maximise the work achieved by those who come, minimise the risk of injury and give greatest satisfaction to all involved.

WORKING FROM HOME

Some staff like to perform some of their work at home, particularly if an office is not provided or available for them on the parish site(s). The parish has a responsibility to assess and ensure that their work place at home is safe and does not contribute towards injury or illness.

Please refer to the section of this module on working environment. Consideration needs to be given to the adequacy of their working space, ergonomics of their furniture and equipment, clear work area lighting, ventilation, heating, cooling and noise. If an office is not provided in the church or administration complex, it may be necessary to supply adequate furniture and equipment for use in their home. Ideally, they should be required to work in one agreed location in their home, so that these issues can be addressed for that particular part of their home. This applies even though they may own their own home or the home is rented.

If satisfactory arrangements cannot be made in their home for a work location, and there is no suitable location in the church or administration complex, adequate provision will need to be made elsewhere.

PARISH RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Sample Check list for Module 4

Working environment

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Do all workers have sufficient working space? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the work space (desk, chairs, computers) set up correctly for the person using it? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the level of noise being managed? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the lighting adequate? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • If staff working from home, is their working environment safe? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Amenities for staff and volunteers

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Are there adequate numbers of toilets? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are there adequate facilities for eating meals? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Facilities for the aged and people with a disability

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Are the aged and people with a disability able to move freely and safely around the site? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Safe work procedures

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Are safe work procedures in place where required? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Manual handling and storage

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Have manual handling tasks been examined and safe practices developed? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Working at heights

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Refer to Safe Work Procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Use and maintenance of Equipment

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Is equipment properly maintained? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are suitable people trained to use the equipment? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

First aid

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Do you have adequate first aid kits and are they readily accessible? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are the first aid kits kept fully stocked? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are qualified first aiders available for church services and other activities? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Workplace consultation

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Do you have a consultation process in place? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Safe playgrounds

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Are the playgrounds safe and well maintained? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Working bees

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Are working bees adequately planned and supervised? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|



RISK

MANAGEMENT