

# Some Practical Tips for Managing Parish Risks

## Some thoughts on risk management generally...

We instinctively do risk management everyday of our lives (e.g. putting a seatbelt on when we get in a car). But **risk management should not stop once we enter the church.**

✓ **Create a 'new culture'** of risk management by adopting, demonstrating and enforcing safe practices to the future leaders of the parish – our youth and children.

• Children in particular will model their own behaviour on the cues observed in adult behaviour.

• When conducting any activity with risks attached **look to ELIMINATE the risk first** (e.g. cease the activity or use a contractor).

✓ Even the most important task is not worth doing if it can't be done safely. **DON'T BE A HERO!**

✓ The **higher the risk the shorter the exposure** must be to that risk (e.g. working at heights).

✓ **If it can't be eliminated then look to MINIMISE** the chance of the risk occurring (e.g. restricting access and egress).

✓ When considering risk treatment options use common sense and consider **"What would a reasonable person do?"**

✓ **Delegating people to particular tasks will focus their attention** on the task at hand (e.g. appointing a Risk Management Coordinator or safety officers for parish events).

BUT make sure they are supported and there are other people who can fill in for them when they are absent.

**Think of a tripod** – if one leg is not operating or missing then it all falls over.

## Some important notes to Parish Councils...

The Rector and Parish Council **MUST** support the risk management program and 'lead from the front' as your parish management program will only ever be as good as the level of support and effort that it is afforded.

### Provide this support by:

✓ Appointing a Risk Management Coordinator for a 2 year term.

✓ **Delegating 'actual' (not implied) authority** to them to implement safe parish practices.

✓ Requiring **regular reporting** on progress.

✓ Providing, as able, the **funds to implement safe practices** within the parish.

✓ **Actively supporting, promoting and enforcing** the safe practices adopted.

✓ Developing and promoting a **parish hazard reporting system** in and make sure reports and/or incidents are followed through.

✓ Making risk management a **standing agenda item** at your Parish Council meetings.

✓ **Make sure new churchwardens are brought up to date** with the progress of the parish's risk management program.

**TIP #1:** As a starting point, determine what your parish's 'Top 5 Risks' are, then assess the level of risk in your own context before tackling them one by one in an agreed.

**TIP #2:** Gently discourage parishioners from performing 'ad hoc' tasks (such as cleaning gutters) without prior permission and the risks being assessed by communicating the parish's safe practices.

**TIP #3:** Safe practices that are not enforced quickly become **OPTIONAL**. For example, the Parish adopts the safe practice of not allowing people to participate in working bees unless they have specific clothing on (eg., long pants, no thongs). Therefore, people **must** be turned away (gently!) if they turn up in shorts and thongs.

### **Some other thoughts...**

**As part of our general duty of care and our Christian love for people, we should go beyond the law to protect all those who come onto our sites – taking a ‘minimalist’ view of risk management is a risk in itself.**

**Consider partnering with neighbouring parishes to ‘risk assess’ each other. Often an independent, objective review of your site may pick up more risks than you first thought!**

**There is no MAGIC PILL for treating parish risks. ELIMINATE or MINIMISE the risk that is most appropriate to your own circumstances.**

*For example, your emergency evacuation plan will be customised to your specific parish situation, that is, the age and mobility of those regularly attending, physical location and the type of services and activities undertaken.*

**Evidence to date suggests that parishes struggle with developing and practising Emergency Evacuation Procedures. Below are some tips worth considering...**

#### **Some tips for developing Emergency Evacuation procedures\***

- ✓ Consider age and physical mobility of those who attend your services and activities (e.g. are your aisles wide enough and free of obstruction so a wheelchair or walking frame can be used?).
- ✓ Assign people to assist the mobility impaired in the event of an evacuation.
- ✓ Ensure leaders of services, youth group, Sunday school teachers, sides-people, ushers etc. are trained in your evacuation procedure and assign them to evacuate specific areas of the parish site (e.g. toilets, halls, kitchen, vestry etc.).
- ✓ Practice church service evacuations at least ONCE per year.
- ✓ Practice youth and children activity evacuations at least TWICE per year.
- ✓ Parents must NOT independently collect their children – leave it to the persons responsible for evacuating those areas.
- ✓ Use your overhead projector, church outlines or permanent cards in the pews to illustrate the parish’s evacuation plan.
- ✓ In your services and activities refer to your evacuation plan regularly.
- ✓ Ensure 3<sup>rd</sup> party users of your site(s) understand the parish’s evacuation procedures.
- ✓ Make sure the Assembly Point is a safe area that is free of hazards.

\* Not exhaustive - for more information on Emergency evacuation procedures refer to Module 1.

**Certain incidents related to safety need to be reported to WorkCover – please refer to the *Incident Notification Wall Chart* with your Risk Management Program to understand what constitute a NOTIFIABLE INCIDENT.**

**FOR SERIOUS INCIDENTS** (refer to the *Incident Notification Wall Chart* with your Risk Management Program) Phone **1300 302 442 IMMEDIATELY** and select **Option 1** to speak to the Diocesan representative.

**FOR OTHER INCIDENTS** (refer to the *Incident Notification Wall Chart* with your Risk Management Program) Phone **1300 302 442 on the same or next business day** and select **Option 2** to speak to a Diocesan representative or leave a message. A Diocesan representative will notify WorkCover within 7 days.

## Some common 'risky' parish activities\*

1. Cleaning gutters
2. Changing lights in the church
3. Working bees
4. Youth group camps
5. Manual handling

(\*Based on the consensus of the parishes that attended the 2008 Regional Training Program)

### Other common parish risks:

- × Slips and trips (refer to Module 1)
- × Absence of formalised emergency evacuation procedures (refer above and to Module 1)
- × Food safety (refer to Module 5)
- × Hazardous materials (refer to Module 2)

### 1. Cleaning gutters

#### What are the risks?\*

- × Falling from a ladder or roof
- × Over reaching and falling
- × Cuts and abrasions
- × Insect or spider bites
- × Items carried up to assist in cleaning the gutters (e.g. a bucket) falling on people below

**NOTE:** When using a ladder, the law requires that there **must be 3 points of contact** with the ladder at all times – two feet and one hand.

#### Risk treatment options\*.

- ✓ **STOP, THINK, PLAN**
- ✓ Install gutter guard to reduce the number of times the gutters need to be cleaned.
- ✓ Contract the work out to a qualified tradesperson.
- ✓ Hire a cherry picker or scissor lift that will be more stable than a ladder. Consider sharing the cost with a neighbouring parish.
- ✓ If a ladder is going to be used make sure that there is someone supporting the ladder at its base.
- ✓ Limit the amount of time on the ladder (observing the 3 points of contact rule) to 10 minute intervals to reduce chance of over balancing or disorientation.

\* This is not an exhaustive list. For more information on Working at heights refer to Module 4.

### 2. Changing lights in the church

#### What are the risks?\*

- × Falling from a ladder or other equipment
- × Over reaching and falling
- × Light bulbs breaking when being removed
- × Electrocutation
- × The light socket/fitting may have deteriorated to such a point that removing the globe will be very difficult, causing over-balancing or the globe breaking in the hand.

**NOTE:** When using a ladder, the law requires that there **must be 3 points of contact** with the ladder at all times – two feet and one hand.

#### Risk treatment options\*.

- ✓ **STOP, THINK, PLAN.**
- ✓ Replace all the lights (and socket/fitting if necessary) at the same time to reduce the number of times the lights need to be changed. Consider using long life lights.
- ✓ Contract the work out to a qualified tradesperson.
- ✓ Hire a cherry picker or scissor lift that will be more stable than a ladder. Consider sharing the cost with a neighbouring parish.
- ✓ If a ladder is going to be used make sure that there is someone supporting the ladder at its base and limit the amount of time on the ladder (observing the 3 points of contact rule) to 10 minute intervals to reduce chance of over balancing or disorientation.

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### 3. Working Bees

#### What are the risks?\*

- ✗ Cuts and abrasions
- ✗ Flying debris
- ✗ Excessive noise (hearing damage)
- ✗ Faulty equipment
- ✗ Equipment used by unqualified and/or inexperienced people.
- ✗ Assuming everyone can use the equipment provided (e.g. a chainsaw)
- ✗ Inadequate protective equipment
- ✗ Lack of planning
- ✗ Lack of supervision of activities and people

#### Risk treatment options\*.

- ✓ **STOP, THINK, PLAN.**
- ✓ Appoint a Working Bee Coordinator and a Safety Officer.
- ✓ Write down a list of what is to be done and what equipment is needed to do the job.
- ✓ Ensure any tasks that require specific skills are done by the appropriate person (e.g. electrical work done by a qualified electrician).
- ✓ Be clear about who can attend (e.g. impose an age limit) and what they must wear.
- ✓ Sign-in and sign-out people who attend the working bee.
- ✓ Turn away people who do not comply with the rules (e.g. inadequate protective clothing).
- ✓ Ensure ALL equipment (parish owned and brought to the site) is safe and working.
- ✓ Delegate tasks according to skill level (use the sign-in sheet to determine).
- ✓ Where necessary prevent access and egress to parish site while working bee in progress.
- ✓ The Safety Officer must supervise the site and the tasks being undertaken during the working bee to reinforce the culture of doing things safely is the only way.

\* This is not an exhaustive list. For more information on Working Bees refer to Module 4.

### 4. Youth Group Camps

#### What are the risks?\*

- ✗ Various injuries from slips, trips and falls
- ✗ Undertaking dangerous, high risk or non-age appropriate activities
- ✗ Lack of planning
- ✗ Travel to and from camp venue
- ✗ Lack of supervision
- ✗ Low adult to child ratio
- ✗ Unaware of pre-existing medical condition of those attending (e.g. anaphylaxis)
- ✗ Lack of clear communication to parents and campers of 'camp rules', activities and 'what to bring' (e.g. clothing requirements)
- ✗ Non-enforcement of camp rules
- ✗ Breaching the camp site owner's 'rules'
- ✗ Undertaking 'high risk' activities that could be outside the Diocesan insurance coverage (e.g. bungee jumping)

#### Risk treatment options\*.

- ✓ **STOP, THINK, PLAN.**
- ✓ Appoint a Safety Officer or officers for the camp.
- ✓ Set a policy for who can drive campers to the site (e.g. will P platers be allowed to drive?).
- ✓ Communicate and implement the policy of "engine on, mobile off" for those driving. It is illegal to operate a hand-held mobile (i.e., not 'hands-free') phone while driving. [NOTE: Evidence suggests that there is no difference in the number of accidents that are caused by holding and talking on a mobile phone as opposed to using one hands-free – it's not how the phone is used but it's the level of concentration given to a phone conversation as opposed to driving.]
- ✓ Use permission slips to describe what activities will be undertaken, determine any pre-existing medical conditions, dietary requirements, parent emergency numbers, approval for seeking medical assistance etc.
- ✓ Avoid using permission slips to 'absolve' the parish of any harm that may come to campers but rather take responsibility and plan to do things safely.
- ✓ Take an adequate first aid kit or kits.
- ✓ 'Scope' the camp site before the camp and where applicable, make sure you can meet the owner's expectations of its use and your intended use.
- ✓ Plan for emergencies (e.g. site evacuation, medical emergencies).
- ✓ Develop, communicate and enforce the 'camp rules'.
- ✓ Ensure any equipment that is taken or supplied is safe and working as it should.
- ✓ Contact the Diocesan Insurance officer if undertaking abnormal or high risk activities.

\* This is not an exhaustive list. For more information on Working at heights refer to Module 4.

## 5. Manual handling

### What are the risks?\*

- × Physical injury
- × Creation of obstacles that become a trip hazard
- × Collapse of shelving if too much weight in stored items

As a general 'rule of thumb', if you can't move the item with your foot, then avoid lifting without some form of assistance.

When lifting items from the floor, remember that you are not only lifting the item but half of your body weight as well – BEND your knees and PUSH up using your legs.

### Risk treatment options\*.

- ✓ **STOP, THINK, PLAN.**
- ✓ Make sure age appropriate and physical ability is taken into consideration when assigning manual handling type tasks (e.g. putting out or stacking chairs).
- ✓ Store heavy items at an acceptable level (i.e., no greater than shoulder height if possible) and as close as possible to where they will be used.
- ✓ When items are delivered make sure they are placed close to where they will be used or stored.
- ✓ Purchase a trolley or other equipment that will reduce physical effort and lifting.

\* This is not an exhaustive list. For more information on Working at heights refer to Module 4.

\* For further information please contact **Colin Murphy** on **9265-1555**  
or [riskmanagement@sydney.anglican.asn.au](mailto:riskmanagement@sydney.anglican.asn.au).