

Church risk assessments

Tower tours

The main reason tower tours are potentially very dangerous is that members of the public are being admitted to an area that they would not normally visit and are unfamiliar with. Towers were never designed to accommodate large numbers of people at the same time.

Church workers or volunteers who regularly enter the tower such as bell ringers and vergers will be aware of

the hazards and know what to expect. Members of the public entering for the first time will not. Ideally, members of the public should not be admitted to towers or other high levels.

However, where it is decided to allow this on occasions such as Heritage Open Days this checklist notes the main hazards and control measures that can be taken to reduce the risk.

Common tower tour hazards	Controls (check and tick as appropriate)
Worn steps	Steps must be repaired and in good condition <input type="checkbox"/>
Slips, trips and falls on stairs	All staircases must be fitted with a handrail. Ideally, for spiral staircases this should be a fixed metal handrail on the outer curve. Although not as effective, a simple way to install a handrail is to run a length of rope down the central column fixed at the top and bottom ideally with intermediate fixings to stop hands becoming trapped <input type="checkbox"/>
Loose debris and pigeon droppings	All staircases and walkways must be swept and cleaned <input type="checkbox"/>
Poor lighting	Fixed bulkhead lighting must be provided along the entire route <input type="checkbox"/>
Low beams, openings, and projections	Consider if this makes route unsuitable <input type="checkbox"/> Provide warning notices, mark with black and yellow hazard warning tape and fix protective foam pads <input type="checkbox"/>
Unrestricted access to dangerous areas	All doors leading onto roof areas or other high levels not a part of the tour must be locked <input type="checkbox"/> If there is no door to these areas then one must be fitted <input type="checkbox"/>
Ringling and bell chambers	Bells must always be in the 'down' position during tours <input type="checkbox"/> Tours should not take place when bells are being rung <input type="checkbox"/> The public should not be allowed to enter the bell chamber even if bells are 'down' <input type="checkbox"/>

Continued overleaf...

Common tower tour hazards	Controls (check and tick as appropriate)
Falls from tower roofs	Parapets and the lowest point of castellation must be a minimum of 1.1 metres in height. <input type="checkbox"/> Gaps in parapeting must be no wider than 150mm <input type="checkbox"/>
Slips and falls on tower roofs	Allow access only during fine weather and never in freezing temperatures <input type="checkbox"/> Drainage channels should be fitted with duckboards and handrails may need to be provided <input type="checkbox"/>
Suitability of people wishing to take part	Warn people regarding the physical effort required <input type="checkbox"/> Stewards should use their own judgement and decline to take up those they feel would 'struggle' <input type="checkbox"/>
Member of tour becoming ill or claustrophobic	Stewards must always carry a mobile phone to summon assistance or if a signal cannot be obtained a fixed landline phone must be installed <input type="checkbox"/>
How would you or the emergency services get someone down if they became ill?	You need to discuss this with the emergency services <input type="checkbox"/> Possible routes if the stairs are unsuitable are through bell louvres if they exist, lowering through bell hatch, or a helicopter off tower roof <input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of control over the group of visitors	Detailed procedures must be in place covering the numbers allowed at any one time, the number of stewards and emergency procedures <input type="checkbox"/>

Elimination of risk

The best control measure of all is to eliminate the risk entirely. Before allowing tower tours, ask yourselves, *"Is our tower really suited to allowing members of the public to climb up or is the amount of work we would have to do to make it safe impractical?"*

"Is there another way of achieving what we want?"

For example, you could create a virtual tour with models, photographs and a video of views from the top. This would allow everyone to see what the tower was like in all weathers.

Risk assessment

Having decided you want to allow tower tours use the **Ecclesiastical risk assessment rating chart** opposite to calculate just how hazardous the risk is by looking at the likelihood of an accident happening and if it does, just how serious the consequences could be if something goes wrong. A high priority means that you cannot go ahead until additional safety measures have been put in place to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Health and safety law and the duty of care

A PCC owes a duty of care to all volunteers and can be prosecuted under The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. **Remember** - before allowing members of the public to climb the tower ask yourself *"Am I really sure this is safe?"*

Further guidance

Ecclesiastical's **Church Health and Safety Guidance Notes** contain detailed advice on the procedures you need to put in place for organising tower tours.

		SEVERITY			RISK RATING: Likelihood x Severity
		1 Low	2 Medium	3 High	
		Minor cuts and bruises	Serious injury or incapacitated for 3 days or more	Fatality or a number of people seriously injured	
LIKELIHOOD	1 Low seldom	1	2	3	1 - 2 = low priority
	2 Medium frequently	2	4	6	3 - 4 = medium priority
	3 High certain or very probable	3	6	9	>5 = high priority take immediate action

Use the above risk rating chart to help you assess how hazardous an activity is. By looking at the likelihood of an accident on the left (low, medium or high) and the severity in the middle, you can decide if there is a risk rating of low, medium or high priority. This will help you decide on the immediacy of any action.

Notes



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