



Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Supplementary information

Why collect this information?

As part of its commitment to creating a safe and healthy working environment and in accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod (the church) will ensure church properties are maintained in a good and safe condition in order to reduce potential exposure to workers¹ within workplaces² and places of worship.

The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations articulate the responsibilities of presbyteries and congregations in relation to the management of church property. The Synod office is committed to providing the tools and information they need to fulfil their duty of care and legislative obligations.

Through creating safer places for all workers and visitors the church can reduce the risk of injury and illness occurring within workplaces and places of worship.

Duty of care

“The Uniting Church has a deep concern for the wholeness and well-being of each individual. Our church seeks to safeguard the welfare of all people regardless of age, who come in contact with the church and its organisations. It is the responsibility of each individual within the fellowship of the church to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all people.”

(The Uniting Church Duty of Care – Adapted policy statement endorsed by the Queensland Synod in 1998)

Legislative and regulatory compliance

In addition to its duty of care, the church has legal obligations to ensure health and safety and property management/maintenance as follows:

The main object of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* is “... to secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces by protecting workers and other persons against harm to their health, safety and welfare through the elimination or minimisation of risks arising from work or from particular types of substances or plant” (Section 3 (1)(a)).

¹ Worker is a person who works for or at the direction of the church and can include employees, volunteers, a contractor and their employees, work experience student, trainee or employees of a labour hire company.

² Workplace is any place where work is carried out for or at the direction of the church and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, whilst at work.

Presbytery Property Committee

Regulation 4.3.2 (a)(v) of *The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations* states:

“A Presbytery Property Committee, subject to any relevant by-laws and directions of the presbytery shall regularly inspect or arrange for the regular inspection of properties for which the presbytery and church councils and other bodies within the bounds of the presbytery are responsible and propose and report to presbytery such action as may seem desirable to ensure that the properties are maintained in good and safe condition.”

Church council

Regulation 4.4.1 of *The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations* states:

“Subject to the Regulations, the by-laws of the Synod and the rules of presbytery, the church council shall be responsible for the management and administration of all property of the church acquired or held for the use of the congregation, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing shall:

(a) be responsible for the care and maintenance of property;

(g) do such other things as are necessary or appropriate for the use and management of all property acquired or held for the congregation.”

To comply with these legislative and regulatory expectations each presbytery and congregation must ensure annual property inspections are conducted and property maintenance checklists are completed. Inspections of each presbytery/congregation property must be completed to identify issues relating to health and safety, property maintenance and insurance.

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Supplementary information

How should this information be used?

This information should be used to identify property maintenance, health and safety concerns and other insurance exposures that may require attention within workplaces and places of worship.

Once completed, each presbytery/congregation should identify any risks or exposures and develop an action plan or steps to take in order to rectify or repair any areas of concern at each property.

For assistance with developing action plans or any other queries in respect of the Annual Property Maintenance Checklist, contact the Queensland Synod office division appropriate to your query as outlined below:

Property Services

Manager, Property Resources: Stephen Peake

Administration Support Officer: Rick Wainwright

Phone: (07) 3377 9838

Fax: (07) 3377 9781

Email: property@ucaqld.com.au

Risk and Insurance

Manager, Risk and Insurance: David Munro

Senior Risk Consultant: Peter Rose

Senior Insurance Adviser: Jason Grimsey

Insurance Assistant: Carrie Maule

Phone: (07) 3377 9725

(07) 3377 9729

Fax: (07) 3377 9781

Email: insurance@ucaqld.com.au

health.safety@ucaqld.com.au

A copy of the completed checklist and action plans must be retained on the congregation records, with a copy forwarded to the presbytery office.

Explanation of questions

Following is an explanation of the questions asked on the Property Maintenance Checklist.

General information /documentation

1. Do you have a Work Health and Safety Policy?

A Work Health and Safety Policy is a commitment to providing a safe place for your workers, members and other visitors. The Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod has developed a policy that may provide direction if one is not in place.

2. When was your last Asbestos Audit undertaken?

If your most recent audit was undertaken as part of the Synod program in 2002 and 2003 it will not comply with the requirements of the current legislation. A review will need to be undertaken in a manner that complies with the current legislative requirements. Please refer to the information sheet distributed in August 2013 for more information.

3. Is there any asbestos present in any of your buildings? Please provide details of known areas and areas that are assumed to contain asbestos in the additional comments field.

Some of this information can be found in your earlier reports.

4. Is the location of all asbestos labelled?

A workplace must ensure the presence and location of asbestos or asbestos-containing materials (ACM) is clearly indicated. The location of asbestos or ACM must be highlighted by a label or warning sign.

5. Is a copy of the report easily accessible to workers and contractors?

The presence and location of the asbestos should be entered on site plans and the asbestos register and be accessible to all workers and contractors to ensure they are aware of the presence of asbestos.

6. Have you implemented ChildSafe™?

ChildSafe™ provides a range of training modules and resources to assist congregations in complying with the mandatory policy and procedural requirements for child protection. Information is available online or in paper form. All congregations have been provided access to ChildSafe™. If you would like further information on how ChildSafe™ can assist your congregation contact the Risk and Insurance Office.

7. Is a copy of your Child Protection Policy readily available to parents?

Each congregation needs to ensure that effective communication is implemented so that parents, carers and other parties are fully aware of your child and youth management strategy. Ensuring your child protection policy is readily available will assist in this regard.

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Supplementary information

8. When was training last provided to your children's and youth leaders?

All leaders must receive regular training in the policies and procedures for working with young people. Training records must be maintained and training needs to be ongoing (minimum of every 12 months). ChildSafe™ can assist in this regard.

Building environment – internal/external

9. Is plant life blocking visibility of the property by passers-by or impeding safe entry or exit from the property by vehicles or pedestrians?

Overgrown plants can affect entry and exit by potentially causing trips, creating fire hazards and increasing the risk of car accidents or collisions between drivers and pedestrians. In addition plants can create a visibility barrier, presenting a possible security risk.

10. Are car parks and footpaths lit during night meetings?

Navigation of car parks and footpaths at night without adequate lighting can cause hazards as members are unable to see where they are going and what is in front of them.

11. Is there security lighting in place and are there lights on throughout the night? Include details about the type of lighting in the additional comments field.

Security lighting is an effective form of protection for most buildings.

12. Are paths and/or walkways free from trip hazards and other obstacles?

Navigation around trip hazards and other obstacles can put members at risk of injury. Clear paths and walkways enable smooth access to the property.

13. Is there disabled access into the facility (ramps etc.)?

It is a requirement for properties to have access for disabled members. It may be classed as discrimination if this service is not provided.

14. Are any windows cracked or broken?

General maintenance such as this directly relates to the security of the property. It also reflects poor maintenance.

15. Do all doors and windows open easily and shut completely?

Members can be put at risk of injury if they have to exert force to open and close windows. Windows which are not secure also present a security risk.

16. Are floor surfaces, carpets or mats in good condition?

Poor maintenance of floor surfaces (holes and tears in carpets, mats, vinyl) can create trip hazards and potentially put members at risk of injury.

17. Are floor surfaces even, level and free from trip and slip hazards?

As stated in Q16, floor surfaces which are not properly maintained can create hazards for slips, trips and falls.

18. Are the internal/external steps/staircases in good condition and fitted with anti-slip tread?

It is important to ensure that steps and handrails are steady and free from cracks, flaking paint etc. as instability and disrepair cause risk to users. Anti-slip tread prevents slipping on wet surfaces.

19. Are handrails or balustrades installed where required (i.e. on stairs or balconies with a fall of more than one metre)?

Handrails must be installed on all staircases or balconies that have a fall of more than one metre. They should also be installed to assist elderly/physically impaired members to climb stairs and/or ramps and to prevent them from being put at risk of injury.

20. Are all aisles, exits and access ways clear of obstructions?

Navigation around obstructions in aisles and access ways can put members at risk of slips, trips and falls. Aisles and access ways must be kept clear of obstructions.

21. Are all electrical cords kept in a safe manner (i.e. clear of all aisles, exits and access ways, not dangling loosely from raised surfaces)?

If not stored or secured in a safe manner electrical cords can become a trip hazard. This can also lead to the cords being damaged or computers or other electrical items being damaged if accidentally pulled off a desk.

22. Are ceilings and walls in good repair (no water leakage, flaking paint, mould or mildew etc.)?

Flaking paint, mould and mildew contain potentially harmful contaminants which can be inhaled, exacerbating existing conditions (such as asthma) or causing illness.

23. Have gutters been cleaned in the past six months?

Obstructions can prevent the flow of water through the gutters and downpipes, resulting in damage such as gutters rusting, clogged downpipes and internal water leaks. In addition to reducing the effective life of the guttering, litter can increase the risk of fire spreading to buildings in bushfire-prone areas.

24. Are building materials, timber pallets, cardboard, loose boards, bricks or tiles stored anywhere on the property?

Materials stored on the property can create potential hazards for members and young children. Combustible materials stored outside a building have been used by arsonists to destroy property. Storing such materials inside sheds or buildings improves defences against arson and vandalism.

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Supplementary information

25. Are rubbish bins stored inside the buildings or secured away from the buildings?

Wheelie bins can be easily pulled up alongside a building and the contents set alight, causing significant damage. Bins should be kept inside a building or chained in a secure location away from the building.

Electrical

26. Is a residual current device (RCD) or safety switch installed on each building?

Safety switches play a vital role in protecting your members and other users of your facilities from electrocution. All buildings should be protected by a safety switch.

27. Have the RCDs been tested in the past six months?

Like all other safety devices it is essential that RCDs are tested to ensure they will work when required. A push button test must be completed every six months and your electrician needs to complete a time test once a year.

28. Have there been any alternative energy systems (solar, wind etc.) installed at your property?

Workers need to be informed if solar panels are installed as they can pose a hazard. Even when the mains power is switched off, energy will continue to be generated increasing the risk of injury and changing the manner in which fire departments will attack a fire.

29. Are all light fittings, switches and power points clean and in good repair (i.e. not cracked, loose or improperly fixed to walls)?

Cracked, loose-fitting power points or switches improperly fixed to walls can put members at risk of electrocution. They are also a fire hazard.

30. Are power boards used instead of household double adaptors?

Double adaptors or piggyback plugs create a potential hazard as leads and adaptors can become partially dislodged, leaving a small gap for another metal object to make contact with the pins. They are prohibited in some workplaces by Electrical Safety Regulation 2002. Power boards should be used instead.

31. If power boards are in use, are they limited to one board per outlet?

Overloading a power board or outlet is a fire risk. If more than one power board is attached to an outlet it is advisable to install additional outlets.

32. Are all power boards and extension leads in good condition (i.e. not frayed or wires exposed)?

Faulty cords or extension leads can put members at risk of electrocution and can be a fire hazard.

33. Has all portable electrical equipment been inspected, tested and tagged by a qualified electrical worker?

Testing and tagging electrical appliances provides an additional level of electrical protection for your congregation. Testing and

tagging requirements are relaxed slightly when appliances are connected to a safety switch however the Electrical Safety Regulation 2002 stipulates that some equipment still must be tested.

34. Are appliances well-maintained and operating correctly (fridges, microwaves etc.)?

It is important that all appliances are hygienically maintained and in good working order to ensure that users are not put at risk of injury or illness.

Ventilation and amenities

35. Are church members satisfied with the building ventilation (i.e. thermal comfort and air quality)?

Hazardous materials have a habit of escaping into the workplace air. Ventilation is all about maintaining the quality of air to a level that is fit to breath. In addition, varying temperatures can cause individuals to experience symptoms such as heat stress in hot weather or lowered blood pressure and decreased heart rate in cold weather.

36. If property is air-conditioned, are filters and vents regularly cleaned?

If not regularly cleaned, contaminants and dust particles can escape into the air and cause illness or exacerbate existing medical conditions such as asthma. Failure to clean the filters and vents can also result in a decline of the system's effectiveness and increased power costs.

37. Are property amenities hygienically cleaned (i.e. kitchen, toilets and showers)?

It is important to keep amenities hygienically clean. This ensures a state of well-being and prevents exposure to illness.

38. Is all furniture in a good and stable condition (chairs, pews etc.)?

Ensure that all furniture is kept in good condition to prevent the risk of injury (such as a chair breaking while being used).

First aid and emergency procedures

39. Are fire exits clearly marked, easily identifiable and free from obstructions?

Fire exits are an essential part of an emergency response plan. They must be clearly identified and free from obstructions at all times. Blocked exits put people at risk.

40. Are all extinguishers and fire hoses easily accessible?

All fire extinguishers and hoses (if applicable) must be easily accessible and free from obstruction.

41. Have extinguishers, hose reels and fire blankets been serviced in the past six months?

All fire extinguishers must be tested bi-annually and maintained and serviced by a competent person.

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Supplementary information

- 42. Are there illuminated exit signs or emergency lights installed in buildings? If you do not have emergency lighting, use the additional comments field to detail your measures to ensure a safe evacuation during an evening meeting.**

Illuminated exits and emergency lighting systems are designed and installed as an essential safety measure. They clearly identify escape routes and provide visibility during power failure. It is important to note that the emergency lighting needs to be tested regularly. If it fails to work you are putting members at risk.

- 43. Are emergency and fire evacuation procedures clearly displayed?**

Emergency and fire evacuation procedures for each building need to be developed and displayed, generally in the vicinity of the exits. Information regarding evacuation procedures should be provided to all users of the property.

- 44. Are workers trained in the evacuation procedures?**

Workers, ushers and other key leaders of the congregation need to be conversant with the evacuation procedures. Training should be provided every 12 months.

- 45. Has a fire drill been conducted in the past year?**

Fire drills ensure workers and members are familiar with the evacuation procedure and enable Fire Wardens to identify areas where procedures may need to be refined. A fire drill should be conducted every 12 months.

- 46. Is there a first aid kit and is it accessible to all members?**

It is a requirement for properties to have a fully stocked first aid kit on the premises to provide initial medical treatment to a member in the event of an injury.

- 47. Do you have designated first aid officers and are their details kept with the first aid kits?**

It is essential to the provision of a safe environment that qualified first aid officers are identified and can take charge should the need arise. Listing these details in the first aid kit will assist in ensuring that the appropriate people can be identified.

- 48. Are contents of the first aid kits appropriate for the property and its activities, and regularly checked and maintained?**

A risk assessment should be conducted to determine the size of the first aid kit. The kit should be checked annually to re-stock any used items and discard items beyond their use-by date.

- 49. Are first aid kits appropriately labelled (i.e. marked with a white cross and green background)?**

First aid kits should be clearly marked with a white cross on a green background. A sign of the same nature should be fixed to the cupboard or door to identify where the kit is stored.

Insurance and security

- 50. Have there been any security issues during the year? If so, have they been resolved?**

Security issues include incidents where property has been stolen or when there has been attempted forced entry. If your congregation has sustained multiple incidents, what measures have you put in place to reduce further losses?

- 51. Is there a burglar alarm installed? In the additional comments field, advise whether this is a local alarm or monitored by a security firm.**

A burglar alarm provides an additional level of security. A monitored alarm is more effective than a local alarm as someone is being notified of the attempted break-in. Local alarms may work if your neighbours are looking out for your property.

- 52. Are there key-operated deadlocks on all external doors?**

Standard door fittings provide limited protection against a break-in. Deadlocks or patio bolts provide increased protection. In some regions underwriters expect homeowners to have deadlocks fitted before they will provide insurance cover. If your congregation has been affected by burglaries or break-in attempts, or if incidents of this nature are common in your neighbourhood, deadlocks should be installed.

- 53. Have key-operated window locks or security screens been installed?**

As stated in Q52 window locks or security screens provide increased protection. If your congregation has been affected by break-ins or attempted break-ins, additional window protection should be installed.

- 54. Is the computer and multimedia equipment secured?**

Valuable portable goods should be kept where practicable in a special room or enclosure accessed only by authorised persons. Musical instruments (apart from heavy instruments such as pianos and organs) should not be left in worship areas during the week or between services.

Repeat thefts are common, in particular the theft of audio-visual equipment. In one insurance year, three Uniting Church congregations had their data projectors stolen on more than one occasion.

- 55. Are your computer systems regularly backed up, and backups kept off-site?**

It is essential that computer data is regularly backed up to ensure the data is not lost due to computer malfunction or loss of the machine. Back-ups must be stored off-site in case of a major event such as a fire.

Annual Property Maintenance Checklist

Supplementary information

- 56. Has your key register been reviewed in the past 12 months? In the additional comments field, advise how many people have keys to the property.**

Managing the number of keys in circulation assists the security of your buildings. A key register enables you to quickly identify key holders. The register should be reviewed regularly and keys returned by people who no longer require regular access as part of their role within your congregation.

- 57. Are the facilities regularly used by other church groups, agencies or by the general community?**

This question takes into consideration the use and safety of our properties, but more importantly the higher duty of care responsibility we have to our tenants.

In addition, consider whether the church is incurring additional liability exposure from the activities being conducted by your tenants.

- 58. Is there a current UCA-endorsed rental agreement in place with all groups who use the property?**

Do you utilise the church's Licence Agreement for Non-exclusive Use Agreement or lease agreements?

- 59. Could your property be shared with other denominations or UnitingCare Queensland activities?**

This question is designed to consider ways in which the church can better utilise its properties from a mission perspective.

Child safety

- 60. Do children attend your church?**

It is important to determine if the property is child safe if children regularly use/attend the church facilities.

- 61. Has work been undertaken to make the environment child safe?**

What measures have been taken to make the property child safe? Have you created a safe play area? Has shade been provided? Are door handles out of reach of young children?

- 62. Do all cupboards and drawers which store sharp and hazardous materials (cutlery, glass, plastic bags etc.) have child-resistant catches?**

It is important to take all possible precautions to reduce the risk of children harming themselves by inadvertently accessing items that can be dangerous.

- 63. Are electrical and gas appliances, particularly kitchen appliances and power tools, inaccessible to children?**

All power tools should be locked away when not in use. Is your kitchen off-limits to children? If you use gas heaters, what measures have been taken to keep children away from the appliances?

- 64. Are safety plugs used in all power points that are not being utilised?**

Safety plugs are designed to reduce the risk of electrocution through objects being pushed into an outlet. If power boards are in use, safety plugs should be installed in unused points. This is even more important in power boards devoid of individual switches as all points will be active as soon as the power board is turned on.

- 65. Are all sources of hot and boiling water inaccessible to children?**

How are tea and coffee supplied to your attendees? Do people help themselves or are they served? If urns are accessible to everyone, are they out of reach of children and set on fixed shelves or cabinets? Avoid placing an urn or kettle on a table to which children have access.

- 66. Are all chemicals, fuels and hazardous substances securely stored?**

All chemicals, fuels and hazardous substances must be locked away after use. Areas sometimes overlooked include under the sink in the kitchen (detergents and insecticides), the amenities (cleaning products) and vestries (Brasso, oils and cleaning products).

- 67. Are all hazardous substances (including poisons) properly labelled and stored in accordance with the Safety Data Sheet (SDS)?**

A Safety Data Sheet (SDS) provides information about the safe storage and use of hazardous substances. It also provides essential first aid information on appropriate action should a substance be ingested. The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 requires an SDS register to be developed for all chemicals and hazardous substances stored or utilised at your property.

- 68. If applicable, is the children's playground and equipment regularly maintained and free from hazards and debris?**

Regular inspections of playgrounds and playground equipment ensures that the equipment is in good operating order, the playground is free from hazard, and safety measures such as soft fall are in the correct areas.