Baptist Churches
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines

BCWA have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for their workers and to protect other people's property from damage.

BCWA also recognises the obligation it has to those who enter BCWA premises and participate in the activities provided, and those who come under its care in an external environment.

This document is underpinned by the following policy statements from the BCWA Safe Church Policy:

- We will give opportunity to all people, including children, to provide input into the programs and activities in which they are to participate, by fostering and valuing their ideas, and encouraging participation in all areas of the life of the church, as far as it is sensible and practical.
- We will obtain information relating to the program participants, including children's health and family situation, to ensure we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs.
- We require all leaders to establish safe physical environments as outlined in the *Safe Church Training Workbook* for BCWA.
- We require team leaders to exercise a duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates made available through the *Safe Church Implementation Guide* for establishment and maintenance of safe ministry environments.
- We require a Safety team to be appointed in each congregation or organisation to ensure that the following areas are incorporated into establishing and maintaining a safe physical environment:
    - Fire safety
    - Venue safety
    - First aid
    - Food safety practices
    - Risk assessment for activities
    - Adequate ministry supervision for activities
    - Transport protocols
    - Critical incident and emergency protocols
    - Ministry reviews
- We require Team Leaders to complete a Permission to Proceed process for their event or program on an annual basis.

In order to fulfil our responsibilities BCWA expects all churches to draw upon the resources located in the *Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA, Safe Church Implementation Guide, Safe Church National Training System and Baptist Insurance Services Risk Management Guide for Churches* to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment
2. Conduct risk assessments
3. Manage risk

1. Provide a Safe and Secure Environment

In providing a safe and secure environment we ensure that:

- Appropriate first aid equipment and personnel are in place for activities
- Safe food handling and hygiene practices are employed
- Information on safe handling of hazardous substances is provided
- Safe visual and auditory care is provided for workers and those attending programs as part of the church
- Onsite and off-site venue hazards are identified, and effective control measures are implemented
- Those undertaking off-site activities (eg: home groups, etc) are encouraged to consider aspects of establishing a safe environment
- Emergency procedures are applied including emergency evacuations, use of fire extinguishers and the development of a Critical Incident Response Plan
- Buildings are maintained in a state of good repair and regular inspections are completed and documented
- Security measures are employed to ensure people and property security.

2. Conduct Risk Assessment

To ensure the safety of our workers and participants, we will complete risk assessments of the environment where work and activities are conducted and will, as far as is reasonably practicable, eliminate or work to manage the identified risks using the following strategies:

- Risks in premises and ministry program activities are identified
- Risk registers to assess risks are completed
- Risk action plans are developed and implemented
- Risk action plans are monitored and reviewed.

3. Manage Risk

In developing and implementing risk management / maintenance plans, we ensure that:

- A Church Safety Officer is appointed
- Areas of risk are identified and managed
- All incidents, areas of potential risk and actual hazards are reported to the Church Safety Officer, using appropriate documentation.

Helpful Definitions

What is Risk?

Risk is the exposure to the possibility of such things as physical damage, injury or delay, economic or financial loss or gain, as a consequence of pursuing or not pursuing a particular course of action. The concept of risk includes:

- The perception that something could happen
- The likelihood of it occurring
- The consequences if it does occur.

What is a Hazard?

A hazard is an actual source of risk that could result in an accident if undue care is not exercised.

What is Risk Management?

Risk management is the process of managing your organisation's exposure to potential risks and actual hazards.

Where risk assessment considers things that might be a risk or could go wrong, hazard identification and control measures relate to actual hazards that are present. In risk management, risks are identified and assessed (Risk Register) in order to prevent them or reduce them, and by providing funds to meet any liability if it occurs.

What is a Risk Register?

A Risk Register is one way of documenting risks that have been identified, control measures that are in place to address risks and the level of risk assessed.

What is a Risk Action Plan?

A Risk Action Plan is used to describe what additional measures you will use to reduce, eradicate or manage potential risks identified in your Risk Register for your organisation. It also includes information on resources required (people, equipment, financial), lines of responsibility and timeline for implementation.

What is a Church Safety Officer?

A Church Safety Officer (CSO) or team is responsible for:

- Liaising with Team Leaders to ensure that all aspects of risk identification, assessment and management are implemented in a church or organisation
- Providing information on safe work practices
- Keeping records of all documentation pertaining to incidents related to risk or hazards associated with the church or organisation's premises and activities
- Keeping senior church or organisation leadership informed of risk management status.

What is a Safety Team?

This team, also known as a Risk Management Team, is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the *Safe Church Policy* and supporting documentation and processes in local churches or organisations.

These *Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines* apply to all pastors, elders, staff members and volunteers associated with ministry in our family of churches (BCWA).

More Information

The *Risk Management and Safe Environment Guidelines* are supported by:

- Safe Church National Training System
- Safe Church Training Workbook for BCWA
- BCWA Safe Church Implementation Guide
- Australian Baptist Ministries Response to Persons of Concern
- Baptist Insurance Services Risk Management Guide for Churches

Contact Information

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These guidelines have been endorsed by the Baptist Churches Western Australia for use in churches and associated organisations.

Baptist Churches Western Australia has adopted the Safe Church Training Agreement through the National Council of Churches in Australia. Due to the autonomy of the local church, we cannot demand that our churches implement the Safe Church Policy. This policy is endorsed by the Baptist Churches Western Australia and in any legal proceedings you may be asked if such recommendations exist and if so, whether or not they were followed. As such, we strongly encourage you to implement this policy.