

Diocese of London **Property Department, Care of Churches**



HEALTH AND SAFETY ON DAC & RCUC VISITS

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1. PRIOR PREPARATION

- (a)** The [Care of Churches Team office](#), or other organiser, should issue a written notice of the visit in advance. He or she should make a general assessment of risks associated with the visit, after studying the documentation provided and making enquiry of the applicant and/or parish representative.
- (b)** Any special advice should be printed on the notice, e.g. "members of the visiting party are advised to wear warm clothing and stout shoes." Such advice is given as informal and helpful guidance only, on the basis of information available. The Organiser may not have visited the site and is not a safety expert.
- (c)** Those attending should wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Thin-soled or slippery shoes, loose clothing that might catch on obstructions, and smart clothing that might be spoiled by rubbing against loose masonry are generally advised against.
- (d)** Any special safety gear such as site helmets is to be provided by the person with responsibility for management of the site (see [Section 4](#)).

- (e) All travel arrangements and safety are the responsibility of each individual person, and at his/her own risk. Any directions to the church or site offered by the Organiser are intended as informal and helpful only. No responsibility will be accepted for routes, services or conditions. Subject to prior agreement, taxi fares may be reimbursed to DAC and RCUC members and consultants to facilitate travel late at night or if there is known to be any special risk. ([Back to top](#))

2. MEETING POINT

- (a) Instructions will be given on the notice as to location and meeting point. A contact person is named on all visit notices, with mobile telephone number. See also [para 4\(b\)](#). If the Contact Person is unable to be present, he/she is responsible for appointing a deputy, and for informing the Care of Churches office or other organiser before the meeting.
- (b) An attendance list should be circulated on the visit notice. The church or site should be opened by the incumbent or churchwarden or site manager. The Contact Person or deputy should arrive a quarter of an hour before the visit, in case anyone else arrives early; and wait near the door until the start of the meeting, to avoid anyone arriving slightly late being locked out.
- (c) On arrival, every person attending should report to the Contact Person, or if arriving late, the main group of the visiting party. Any person expecting to arrive late is asked to call the Contact Person.
- (d) Toilet facilities should be made available by the parish or site manager, and also a place to sit with drinking water. Where they do not exist in the church, such facilities should if possible be made accessible in the church hall, office, vestry or parsonage.
- (c) The Contact Person or deputy must be informed before entering any hazardous or unoccupied/secluded area, such as a tower or organ blower chamber, and again on emerging. ([Back to top](#))([This section only](#))

3. CHURCHES

- (a) The following are examples of aspects which may need special care and attention, but are not exhaustive:-
 - (i) Steps and trip hazards. Be aware of where your feet are placed, especially looking up!
 - (ii) Slippery floors. Be aware, especially in poor light.

- (iii) Wet, icy and mossy paths. Be aware of weather conditions, especially in shady areas or at night. Bird droppings can render York stone impassable safely in the rain.
 - (iv) Collapsing tombs and leaning gravestones. Do not disturb, or stand close to the leaning side.
 - (v) Monuments. Heavy wall monuments should not be touched or disturbed.
 - (vi) Pulpits. Beware of any loose or uneven steps. If in doubt, do not ascend the pulpit.
 - (vii) Glass partitions. Before recent times, safety glass may not have been used.
 - (viii) Galleries. Pay attention to any bowing of the structure, flimsy guardings.
 - (ix) Towers. Must not be entered alone without careful consideration (see [Section 5](#)). Never enter the tower without another person remaining at the foot of the stairs throughout.
 - (x) Bells. Bells and gear must never be touched by an unqualified person. Do not attempt to pull bell ropes or ring the bells.
 - (xi) Clocks. Keep clear of any weights and pulleys.
 - (xii) Be aware of the adequacy or otherwise of ceiling headroom and any reduced clearances at openings etc, conditions of lighting and ventilation. Do not enter unlit or unventilated areas.
 - (xiii) Asbestos. Special expertise is not required on the part of visitors, but should any material be seen which it appears may contain asbestos, you should report but not touch it.
- (b) In general, visitors should familiarise themselves with the layout of the building, in particular the exit doors and stairs. Avoid walking and looking around at the same time. Make sure you are in a safe and balanced position if taking notes or photographs.
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4. SITES WITH WORK IN PROGRESS

- (a) Safety on any building site is the responsibility of the Building Contractor and Site Manager, who will be responsible for setting all rules on site and for issuing equipment such as hard hats. The instructions of the Site Manager must always be followed.

- (b)** The meeting place for any building site will be either outside the site entrance, or the Site Manager's office. Once inside, visitors must report directly to the office, not entering any other area en route. The Contact Person (see [para 2\(a\)](#)) should await others there. If the meeting point is at the entrance, the group should gather there, then proceed together to the site office. Visitors should sign the book and don any protective equipment before proceeding elsewhere.
- (c)** Consumption of alcohol aggravates building site risks. As with driving, the best advice is not to drink any alcohol before going on site.
- (d)** Regard shall be had to building site hazards if works are in progress; if in doubt, refer to the Site Manager. The following are examples of good and safe practice, but are not exhaustive:-
 - (i)** Take care around excavations and holes in floors – looking for defects in the floors ahead.
 - (ii)** Scaffold planks are laid loose, and may tip or slide. Do not tread on the end of any plank which projects beyond its supporting pole.
 - (iii)** Guard rails, temporary barriers or scaffolding must not be leaned on.
 - (iv)** When ascending or descending a ladder, hold it by its main stretchers, not the rungs, and with both hands. Make sure you have both hands free. Stow any hand-held object in a pocket or bag before ascending, or leave it at the bottom. Take care with any shoulder-bag or camera. Do not ascend too close to the person above, lest he/she tread on your fingers. When coming down, allow for the person below.
 - (v)** Take care when alighting and/or turning in a tight landing area. Be aware of crossing scaffold poles behind your back. Your headroom is reduced by your hard hat. See also [para 5\(b\)](#).
 - (vi)** Electrical fittings, wires and cables, machinery and stacked materials must be kept clear of. ([Back to top](#))([This section only](#))

5. INSPECTION OF TOWERS, CLOCKS AND BELLS

- (a)** If any area is to be entered safely, fixed lighting giving even illumination must be present and working. Do not enter any dark area without first switching on the lights. A torch is insufficient except as an addition when examining something in detail.
- (b)** Care must be taken when ascending worn treads of spiral staircases. The pitch often varies, calling for extra care. To reach the clock level there may be wooden ladders, sometimes vertical and with trap doors

and slide covers. Most of the points about ladders, made in [para 4\(d\)](#), apply to towers also.

- (c)** Take care if there is any stored junk or other obstructions in a tower.
- (d)** If inspecting a weight-powered clock movement, the enormous latent power in falling weight(s) must be borne in mind. Before any attempt is made to examine the movement, the weights should be lowered to the ground or the barrel clicks examined for locking.
- (e)** Check the floor for any cut-outs through which clock weights did or do descend, and any loose floor boards.
- (f)** Care should be taken of any electrical motors, switches etc. There are still electro-mechanical clocks in use where the wiring leaves a lot to be desired, even with mains exposed terminals.
- (g)** Take care if inspecting motion works, dial backing etc, which usually requires climbing over and under the bells and frames. This should not be attempted other than by an experienced clocks specialist.
- (h)** If visiting the bell chamber, or if ascending to the clock, which entails passing the bells, it is essential to ensure that the bells are in the down position. Do not enter if the bells are up.
- (j)** If the bells are ringing, do not ascend the tower without ear-muffs. When ascending, be aware that the tower structure may physically move. No-one other than an experienced bells professional should enter the bell chamber during ringing, even with ear protection.
- (k)** Take special care if climbing over or between the beams in a bell frame.
- (m)** Spiral steps to the uppermost stages of some towers are very steep and narrow, and may have treads so tiny that it is hardly possible to place the whole ball of the foot on them. There may be no handrail! Do not ascend without suitable footwear. Do not go up unless satisfied that you can come down again safely, if necessary backwards.
- (n)** The exit onto the leads of a tower may be very small. Take care when on top of an open tower, bearing in mind wind, the state of lead or asphalt, any steps, trips or obstructions, the height and condition of parapets.
- (o)** The presence of pigeons and their droppings presents a health hazard. Pigeons carry disease. The droppings cause slipperiness. The smell may be very potent, necessitating masks and protective clothing. If climbing ladders or touching any surface soiled by guano, hands should be washed thoroughly after exposure. ([Back to top](#))([This section only](#))

6. EMPTY BUILDINGS

- (a)** Buildings which have been empty for some time may present special hazards, such as insecure floors and stairs, hidden openings, asbestos, live services, intruders, contamination by vermin or birds or poisonous substances put down to control them, poor air quality; even the possibility of structural failure.
- (b)** Any person entering an empty or abandoned building does so at his/her own risk. ([Back to top](#))

7. INDIVIDUALS OR SMALL GROUPS

- (a)** Visits without Care of Churches Team support should be notified to the office in advance please. The individuals concerned and/or the Organiser shall be responsible for matters covered in [Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6](#) in this case.
- (b)** Any building should not be visited on a person's own unless someone has been informed of where they are and the expected time of return. If the building may be unsafe, it should not be visited alone.
- (c)** Care of Churches staff attending any visit are required to sign the book on leaving Diocesan House. If other staff are on holiday, a colleague in the Property Department as well as staff on reception should be informed of the destination and expected time of return.
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**Diocese of London
Care of Churches Team
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