

London Diocesan Advisory Committee



HOW TO DEAL WITH THEFT OF METAL FROM YOUR CHURCH

1. [INTRODUCTION](#)
 2. [SECURITY MEASURES](#)
 3. [ACTION IN THE EVENT OF METAL BEING STOLEN](#)
 4. [DO I NEED A FACULTY? HOW CAN I GET A FACULTY?](#)
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1. INTRODUCTION

(a) Theft of metal from church buildings is not a new problem, unfortunately. The material most frequently stolen is lead though other metals, such as copper, are also often at risk. Church roofs, guttering and lightning conductors are parts of the building most commonly affected.

(b) There has been a notable increase in the incidence of such thefts in recent years, due to the rising value of these materials. This has led to a significant rise in claims from insurance companies. It is not just the cost of replacing these materials that is a problem; their removal can result in severe water penetration of the building, leading to costly and significant repair works.

(c) This paper outlines some of the security measures you may wish to put in place, advises on what to do in the event of theft and discusses the options available when replacing stolen materials.

[\(Return to top\)](#)

2. SECURITY MEASURES

(a) Keep an eye on the church and inform the police and other nearby churches of any suspicious activities.

(b) Carry out regular checks of the church building. If access is possible, it is particularly important to check those areas not easily visible from ground level, such as roofs. If you do not do this, it may not be until water starts penetrating the building that you find out some of your roof covering has been removed.

(c) Consider removal of vegetation which impedes surveillance of an area.

(d) Ensure that ladders, wheelbarrows and any other means of transporting stolen goods are safely stored away when not in use.

(e) Restrict vehicular access into the churchyard to prevent burglars from having an easy getaway.

(f) Consider applying anti-climb paint to drainpipes and roof guttering. Anti-climb paint should only be used over a height of 2 metres and a warning notice should be put up indicating that anti-climb paint has been applied. Anti-climb is very sticky and is difficult to remove from hands or clothing. It is important that you seek professional advice before its application. Discuss with your Quinquennial Inspector (QI) first.

(g) Protect the lower level of lightning conductors by encasing them in a sheath making removal more difficult.

(h) Consider improving the method of fixing metal materials, particularly on roofs. For example, hollow rolls of lead with copper clips are harder to take apart than some other forms of fixing.

(i) Introduce security lighting, particularly in vulnerable areas, and ensure that regular checks are carried out to ensure that it is working properly. Lights need to be disposed carefully so as to avoid pools of darkness. For example, if someone enters a lit up area, once their eyes have adjusted to the bright light, it may actually make it *easier* for someone in a shadow area to slip away unseen. You may even wish to set up Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras.

(j) Install intruder alarm protection of external roof areas using appropriate infra-red beam detectors, preferably with an automatic transmission of alarm signals to a 24-hour manned alarm receiving centre. A decoy alarm box in an obvious position may prove a useful deterrent.

[\(Return to top\)](#) [\(This section only\)](#)

3. ACTION IN THE EVENT OF METAL BEING STOLEN

(a) If metal has been stolen from your building you should first of all contact 0300 123 1212 and report the crime to the Metropolitan Police, or alternatively dial 999 if a theft is actually taking place.

(b) After this has been done, contact the following:

- Your Insurance Company
- Your Quinquennial Inspector (QI)
- Your Archdeacon
- The Diocese of London's Care of Churches Team (020) 7932 1230
- English Heritage (if your church has in the recent past been the subject of funding from the EH/HLF Repairs to Places of Worship scheme).

(c) Accepted practice is to replace the material stolen in a like-for-like fashion, particularly if it is high-performing, such as lead or copper. This also often helps to retain the historic and architectural character of a building, which is a significant consideration if it is listed.

(d) However, if the security measures recommended in [Section 1](#) have not proved a deterrent and the threat of theft remains high, you may wish to consider using other materials in place of the stolen metal, such asterne-coated stainless steel or zinc. These materials have less saleable value and are therefore less likely to be stolen. However, this advantage should be balanced up against the fact that they are unlikely to match the durability of a high-performance material such as lead.

[\(Return to top\)](#) [\(This section only\)](#)

4. DO I NEED A FACULTY? HOW CAN I GET A FACULTY?

(a) If the repair works to be carried out are like-for-like and cost under £5,000 excluding VAT and scaffolding, you do not need a faculty. Simply notify your Archdeacon before the contract to carry out the works is entered into.

(b) If the works cost over this amount and/or the work proposed is not like-for-like you will need to obtain a faculty. If the repairs are urgent (e.g. to stop water coming through the roof) you will be able to obtain an emergency faculty. To do this, you will need to write to the Diocesan Registry outlining the problem and the proposed solution, copying in the Care of Churches Team and your Archdeacon.

(c) If you are not proposing to carry out a like-for-like repair but are intending to use an alternative material (see [Section 3\(d\)](#) above) it is likely that the Chancellor will wish to hear the views of the Diocesan Advisory Committee before making his decision. If your building is listed,

the views of English Heritage and the relevant amenity society will also need to be sought.

(d) If you are installing new security lighting, CCTV cameras or an alarm system a faculty may be required. Speak to your QI, Archdeacon, the Care of Churches Team and your insurance company about any such proposal.

[\(Return to top\)](#) [\(This section only\)](#)

Relevant links

http://www.ecclesiastical.com/ourproducts/insurance/churchinsurance/church_security/anti_theft_advice/index.aspx

**Care of Churches Team
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