

# **Occupational Health & Safety Priesthood Leader Handbook**

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Contains excerpts from:

Stake Presidents and Bishops Handbook 1 2010

Administering the Church Handbook 2 2010

Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses  
and Other Church Property  
(outside the United States and Canada)

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## **Accident Reporting**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.3.6 and Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 13.6.20)

Church activities should involve minimal risk of injury or illness to participants or of damage to property. During activities, leaders make every effort to ensure safety. By planning effectively and following safety precautions, leaders can minimize the risk of accidents.

The Bishop or stake president should be notified promptly if:

1. An accident, injury, or illness occurs on Church property or during a Church-sponsored activity.
2. A person who was participating in a Church-sponsored activity is missing.
3. Damage to private, public, or Church property occurs during a Church-sponsored activity.

If a person has been seriously injured or is missing, if property has been seriously damaged, or if legal action is threatened or anticipated, the stake president (or bishop under his direction), promptly takes one of the following actions:

1. In the United States or Canada, he notifies the Risk Management Division at Church headquarters (1-800-240-4049 or 1-800-453-3860, extension 2-4049; after business hours or on weekends, call 1-800-240-1000 or 1-800-453-3860, and the operator will contact someone immediately).
2. Outside the United States and Canada, he notifies the Area Office.

Leaders also report injuries and damage involving Church facilities or property to the facilities manager.

Leaders should review the applicability of the Church Activity Insurance Program if an injury occurred during a Church-sponsored activity, event, or assignment.

The stake president (or bishop under his direction) refers questions about safety issues or claims against the Church to the Risk Management Division or to the area office.

See Handbook 2, 13.6.20, for additional instructions on how to proceed in case of an accident or emergency.

## **Accident Response**

(Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 13.6.20)

If an accident of injury occurs on Church property or during a Church-sponsored activity, leaders observe the following guidelines, as applicable:

1. Render first aid. If a person needs medical care beyond simple first aid, contact emergency medical services, the bishop or stake president, and the parent, guardian, or other next of kin.
2. In case of a missing person or fatality, immediately notify local law enforcement authorities and cooperated fully with them.
3. Provide emotional support.
4. Do not encourage or discourage legal action against the Church, and do not make commitments on behalf of the Church.
5. Gather and preserve witness names and information, accounts of what happened, and photographs.

## **Baptismal Fonts**

(Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 20.3.5)

A responsible adult should be present while the baptismal font is filling and remain until it is empty and secured. The font should be drained and cleaned immediately after each baptismal service. Appropriate safety precautions should be taken whenever water is in the font.

When the font is not in use, all doors to it should be closed and locked.

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

When the baptismal font is not in use, all access doors to the font should remain closed and locked. The font should be drained and cleaned immediately after each baptismal service. A responsible adult should be present while the font is filling and remain until it is empty and secured.

## **Decorations**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.2)

Decorations for Christmas, other holidays, and other similar occasions may be placed temporarily in the foyer or cultural hall of a meetinghouse, as approved under the direction of the Stake Presidency. With the exception of flowers, decorations may not be placed in the chapel area of the meetinghouse. Nor should the exterior of the meetinghouse or the grounds be decorated.

Decorations should be modest and inexpensive and must not be a fire hazard. Hay, straw, palm fronds, other dehydrated materials, and lighted candles may not be used. If Christmas trees are used, they should be artificial or properly fireproofed and displayed without electric lights or candles. Local fire and safety codes and ordinances should be observed.

## **Emergencies**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.4 and Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 21.2.3)

During an emergency, the stake presidency determines whether or not to hold regular ward meetings.

In a community-wide emergency or disaster, the stake president may assist legitimate disaster relief agencies by allowing meetinghouses to be used as emergency shelters. The Church retains control. Stake and ward leaders ensure that people who use the buildings observe Church standards of conduct, including the Word of Wisdom, while they are in the buildings. For more information about emergencies, see 5.1.3.

## **Emergency Procedures**

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

Local Priesthood leaders should develop plans to respond to various emergencies that might occur at the meetinghouse. They should use these plans for training others in emergency procedures and for reference during times of emergency.

A ward building representative should be available during Sunday meetings to respond as needed if building problems occur. The facilities management group, when requested by the stake physical facilities representative, provides basic training in the operation of the mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and sound systems and furnishes a list of service companies that may be called in an emergency.

Local priesthood and auxiliary leaders should be prepared to call the police, the fire department, or paramedics, if needed. In the case of a fire, they should activate the fire alarm if there is one and be prepared to operate the fire extinguisher. Leaders should also know how to shut off the water, electrical power, and gas or fuel oil. The facilities manager can provide training in these procedures.

The stake may ask the facilities manager to prepare a diagram of each building, showing the location of telephones, the main supply panel, shutoff valves for gas (or fuel oil) and water, fire extinguishers, and a first aid kit.

## **Food and Beverages**

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

Members should clean up spills as soon as possible and should dispose of waste materials in appropriate containers outside the building. No food should be left inside the building.

## **Firearms**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.5)

Churches are dedicated for the worship of God and as havens from the cares and concerns of the world. The carrying of lethal weapons, concealed or otherwise, within their walls is inappropriate except as required by officers of the law.

## **Fire Prevention**

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

The risk of a fire can be reduced if all who use the meetinghouse take reasonable precautions. Following are some suggested fire prevention measures. Leaders and members should: Keep all flammable materials, including wood, paper products, chemicals, and other debris out of boiler rooms, furnace rooms, mechanical spaces, and utility tunnels; keep all closets, cabinets, and other storage areas free from flammable clutter; and permit no dehydrated, flammable materials to be brought into the meetinghouse (this includes straw, hay, cornstalks, grass, and dried palm fronds).

Flammable liquids, including paint, paint thinner, gasoline, oil, and camping fuel, and any yard or camping equipment should not be stored inside a meetinghouse. Stage scenery or props should be removed from the building as soon as possible after use.

Open flames and lighted candles may not be used inside the meetinghouse, and the use of space heaters should be avoided. In addition, local fire codes and ordinances need to be followed when using decorations. The facilities manager can provide this information.

## **Fires and Candles**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.6 and Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 21.2.5)

Open flames and lighted candles may not be used in Church buildings.



## **Insurance and Questions**

(Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 13.6.20)

Leaders should review the applicability of the Church Activity Insurance Program if an injury occurred during a Church-sponsored activity, event, or assignment. For information about insurance see 13.6.9. ***(please note 13.6.9 is applicable for United States and Canada only)***

The stake president (or a bishop under his direction) refers questions about safety issues or claims against the Church to the Risk Management Division or to the area office.

## **Organization**

### **1. Physical Facilities Department**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.2.1)

### **2. Stake Presidency**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.2.3)

Members of the stake presidency ensure that Church facilities are appropriately used, cared for and protected. They teach leaders and members their responsibilities for using and caring for those facilities. They assign a high councilor to be the stake physical facilities representative. They meet with him as needed to review needs and projects.

### **3. Stake Physical Facilities Representative**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.2.4)

The stake physical facilities representative (a high councilor) assists the stake presidency in physical facilities matters as follows:

He helps teach and implement meetinghouse use and care standards.

He coordinates the distribution and control of keys.

He coordinates the instruction of ward building representatives in their duties.

He participates in annual meetinghouse inspections conducted by the facilities manager, unless the stake presidency designates an alternate to participate.

#### **4. Agent Bishop**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.2.5)

If more than one ward meets in a building, the stake presidency assigns one bishop to be the agent Bishop. He coordinates assignments for member participation in meetinghouse care and maintenance. He also coordinates safety and security procedures for the meetinghouse. In addition, he coordinates scheduling of the building with the stake and other wards that use it, though he may assign another member to do the scheduling.

#### **5. Bishopric**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.2.6)

Members of the bishopric are responsible for the use, care, and security of the meetinghouse. They teach ward members how to use and care for it. They organize member participation in meetinghouse care and maintenance, making assignments as needed. They also distribute meetinghouse keys.

Members of the Bishopric ensure that appropriate safety precautions are taken in the meetinghouse and on the grounds (see 8.3.5)

## **6. Ward Building Representative**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.2.7)

Each ward should have a ward building representative. The bishop may appoint a member of the bishopric to serve in this position, or the bishopric may call another member to do so.

The ward building representative helps the bishopric with meetinghouse responsibilities such as energy conservation, safety, security, snow removal (if applicable), and member participation in cleaning and maintenance. He takes care of building-related needs during meetings, activities, and emergencies. If needed, he receives instruction from the stake physical facilities representative in operating sound, heating, air conditioning, and other building systems.

## **7. Members**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.2.8)

Priesthood leaders emphasize that member participation is a key factor in meetinghouse care and maintenance. Members are encouraged to provide individual or group services, depending on their skills and abilities.

## **Overnight Lodging or Camping**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.13)

Church meetinghouse properties may not be used for overnight lodging, camping, or slumber parties.

## **Parking Lots**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.14)

Use of Church parking lots should comply with the guidelines at the beginning of section 8.4. In addition, Church parking lots should not be used for commuter parking without permission from the director for temporal affairs.

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

Meetinghouse parking lots are for the convenience of all Church members and guests. It is inappropriate to designate reserved spaces, except for persons with disabilities. A number of such spaces, as required by local jurisdiction, should be marked. Wheelchair ramps from the parking surface to the sidewalk, convenient to those spaces, should be provided. The facilities manager can have ramps installed where needed.

Large trucks, motor homes, travel trailers, or similar vehicles may not be parked overnight, nor should the lots be used for extended parking or storing of private or commercial vehicles. In addition, parking lots should not be used for displaying vehicles for sale.

Local leaders, at their discretion, may restrict the use of parking lots, sidewalks, or any part of the facility from activities that might put participants in physical danger, cause damage to the facility, disturb surrounding neighbors, or unduly expose the Church to liability.

## **Policies on Using Church Buildings and Other Property**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4)

Church buildings and other property are to be used for worship, religious instruction, and other Church-related activities. Church property should not be used for commercial or political purposes, which would violate laws that permit its tax exemption. Nor may property be used for other purposes that would violate these laws. The following list provides examples of uses that are not approved:

1. Renting or leasing Church facilities for commercial purposes.
2. Promoting business ventures or investment enterprises, including posting commercial advertising or sponsoring commercial entertainment.
3. Buying, selling, or promoting products, services, publications, or creative works or demonstrating wares.
4. Holding unauthorized fund-raising activities (see Handbook 2, 13.6.8).
5. Hosting speakers or instructors who are paid customers or clients while giving seminars, lessons, aerobics classes, and so on. Exceptions may be made to use meetinghouse pianos and organs for paid private instruction (see Handbook 2, 14.7).
6. Holding organized athletic events that are not sponsored by the Church, including practices.
7. Holding political meetings or campaigns. As an exception, Church facilities may be used for voter registration and as polling places at the request of voting officials if:
  - a. There is no reasonable alternative.
  - b. The officials and voters maintain Church standards in the building.
  - c. The event will not pose physical danger to the building.
  - d. The event will not harm the image of the Church.

The use of Church property should not pose a significant risk of harm to participants or to the property. Nor should it unduly expose the Church to liability or disturb surrounding neighbors.

For more detailed instructions on using and caring for Church buildings and other property, see *Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church property* or contact Church headquarters or the assigned administrative office.

## **Property Rights and Ownership**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.16)

All property assigned to or held for the benefit of local units belongs to the Church, not the units. Nevertheless, local units have broad autonomy in using Church-owned property, including buildings, land, and other property, subject to the ownership and policies of the Church.

## **Protecting Meetinghouses**

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

Every attempt should be made to ensure that each meetinghouse is safe and protected. Those who use Church meetinghouses should be taught the proper safety procedures and be shown how to keep the meetinghouse secure.

## **Reporting Damage**

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

Stake and ward leaders should promptly report to the facilities manager all incidents of damage to the meetinghouse.

If a serious injury occurs on Church property, follow the instructions in the Church Handbook of Instructions.

## **Safety and Security**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.3.5)

Priesthood leaders instruct members, especially women and youth, not to be alone in an unlocked Church building.

Leaders should take reasonable measures to keep hallways, stairs, stairwells, exit doors, utility rooms, and sidewalks free of obstructions and other hazards. Leaders also ensure that hazardous materials or flammable items such as equipment fuel, hay, straw, cornstalks are not used or stored in meetinghouses (see also 8.4.2).

Leaders control key distribution and establish effective building lockup procedures. They also see that interior classrooms and other rooms that do not contain valuable items are left unlocked.

Leaders ensure that local emergency telephone numbers for the police, fire department, and ambulance are posted on or near each telephone with brief instructions. They report intruders to the police immediately.

## **Safety Precautions**

(Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 13.6.20)

Activities should involve minimal risk of injury or illness to participants. Activities should also involve minimal risk of damage to property. During activities, leaders make every effort to ensure safety. By planning effectively and following safety precautions, leaders can minimize the risk of accidents.

Activities should include appropriate training and proper supervision. They should also be appropriate for the participants' age and maturity.

Leaders should be prepared for emergencies that may occur. They should also know in advance how to contact local law enforcement and emergency services.

## **Security and Lockup Procedures**

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

Leaders should consider using a stake-established schedule for meetinghouse closing times and lockup procedures. These procedures should be followed each night shortly after the established closing time.

Leaders may want to assign individuals to lock up the building in pairs to minimize personal danger. The lockup procedure should include seeing that no unauthorized persons remain in the building, that all lights are turned off, and that the doors and windows are locked.



Members who have access to the meetinghouse during off hours should be advised to lock the exterior doors when they enter or leave. They should also close and lock all windows before leaving.

Classrooms or other rooms that do not contain valuable items should not be locked.

Priesthood leaders should see that computers, copy machines, and audiovisual equipment are stored in locked rooms or storage areas. In addition, computers and electronic equipment should be marked as Church property and a list kept of their model and serial numbers.

### **Serving Areas (Kitchen)**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.18 and Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 21.2.11)

The serving area in Church meetinghouses is not intended for food preparation or cooking unless it is part of a lesson, demonstration, or other instruction. When food is to be served in the building or on the grounds, it should be prepared elsewhere and brought to the meetinghouse, where it may be kept warm or cold until it is served.

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

The serving area is intended primarily to be a place where food prepared elsewhere is served. It should not be used to prepare food to sell on or away from the property nor should food or drink be stored beyond its immediate planned use.

The area should be cleaned after each use and all garbage properly disposed of outside the building.

Dishwashers, food storage freezers, and commercial-type ranges are not authorized for meetinghouse serving areas.

The facilities management group routinely refinishes or polishes the floor as needed. Members, through participation assignments, should clean the counters and appliances. (See “Cleaning Chemicals” of this document and “Serving Areas,” *Church Handbook of Instructions*)

## **Stage Productions and Equipment**

(Facilities Management Guidelines for Meetinghouses and Other Church Property)

The lighting equipment and sound system provided in meetinghouse standard plans should be used for plays and other stage productions. No additional permanent sound or lighting equipment should be installed. Portable lighting, sound equipment, and related accessories may be purchased or rented at local expense.

Care should be taken not to overload electrical circuits or create other fire and safety hazards (see “Fire Prevention”)

## **Storage**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.4.20 and Handbook 2 Administering the Church 2010 21.2.12)

The only storage allowed in meetinghouses is for maintenance items and other approved supplies and equipment. Welfare commodities and other such items may not be stored in meetinghouses.

Material such as gasoline, propane, matches, and camping gear should be stored in buildings that are separate from the meetinghouses.

Cars, recreational vehicles, and other personal equipment may not be stored on Church property.

## **Use and Care of Meetinghouses**

(Handbook 1 Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010 8.3.1)

Local Church leaders and members are responsible for the use and care of meetinghouses. They are assisted by local facilities personnel. Leaders strive to ensure that meetinghouses and grounds are always neat, clean, attractive and in good repair. Church facilities should reflect proper care and respect in every way.

Church members, including youth, should help clean and care for meetinghouses. As members provide such service, their reverence for the Lord's house deepens. Where possible, members should fulfill this responsibility as part of weekly events when they are already at the meetinghouse. Members may also be asked to help clean other Church facilities.