

RE-OPENING A BUILDING CHECKLIST

Version 4: 20 July 2021

Version 9	Updated to reflect changes for Government's Step 4 guidance
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During lockdown, churches were encouraged to carry regular property checks, but we appreciate that this was not always possible for some trustees. It is therefore crucial that churches adopt a formal process for reopening their properties to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose. The guidelines below are generalised and to try to cover every eventuality, but we appreciate that all buildings are different and therefore, any specific queries not addressed by this guidance should be directed to the [Property Support team](#).

Organisation of Pre-Visit Process

Where possible, there should be a risk assessment for re-opening a property in association with your church property steward and the managing trustees or other church members. This is to ensure an organised and planned approach which brings collective decision making and safety for all those concerned in undertaking these checks. The checklist on the following page is designed to be filled in electronically or printed off for completing by hand, whichever is most convenient:

Name of Church	Checklist undertaken by
Address	Area of the building accessed
Postcode	
Date of Initial Assessment	Review Date (if applicable)

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Checks to be Made	Completed	Any further action?
<p>1. Airing the Building</p> <p>Open up the windows and doors for at least an hour to let the building air out. If the building has been closed during lockdown, there is a risk of excessive dust and mould. No one should be in the building during this time for safety reasons.</p>		
<p>2. Outside the Building Checks</p> <p>While the building is airing out, you could check the outside of the building.</p> <p>Check the gutters, flashings, downpipes and gullies are not blocked/damaged from ground level and where practical.</p> <p>Check for any break-ins or vandalism.</p> <p>Ensure that all perimeter fences, railings or gates, security lighting and other deterrents to thieves are in good working condition.</p> <p>Ensure that all CCTV is working and notices are in place.</p> <p>Look over the churchyard and check for loose headstones.</p> <p>Check to see if any trees, shrubs or climbing plants, which might pose a security, safety, or damaging effect on the building or walkways are cut back.</p>		

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<p>3. Check Cleanliness of Building</p> <p>Once the building has aired, check the general cleanliness of the building.</p> <p>Look for any leaks from pipes or animal waste (e.g. bats or mice).</p> <p>Make a note of anything that needs to be included during the initial cleaning.</p>		
<p>4. Electrics</p> <p>If the electrics were turned off, these will need to be switched back on.</p> <p>Check the lights, light bulbs, emergency lights, fire alarms, security systems are in good working order</p> <p>There is risk of deterioration of portable electrical equipment. It is recommended to carefully check all electrical appliances, preferably by having a PAT test. More information can be found here.</p>		
<p>5. Heating</p> <p>If the heating system was turned off, it is recommended to switch it on in order to check for leaks.</p> <p>It is also recommended to gradually increase the temperature as a high spike in temperature could affect any delicate fabrics or natural materials in the building.</p>		

<p>6. Water Systems and Legionella</p> <p>Legionella can occur when water is stagnate for long periods of time. The bacteria can form where droplets of water remain stagnant. During this unprecedented closure of our church buildings, the risks of this happening are increased. As some churches are now planning for reopening, it is important that this risk is taken very seriously as part of the overall process of re-opening a church building.</p> <p>Here is the checklist of what should have been done:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All water systems should be flushed on a weekly basis (ideally twice/week). 2. All hot water storage systems should be switched off (but not drained) and flushed to prevent the storage of hot / warm water. 3. All taps (hot and cold) should be run at half pressure for 5 minutes each at every flushing. 4. All outside taps should be run at half pressure for 5 minutes each at every flushing. 5. All toilets should be flushed twice at every flushing. 6. All showers should be run for five minutes each at every flushing (ideally run these into a bucket to prevent mist and droplets being breathed in by the tester). 		
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7. All hot water boilers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
8. All dishwashers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
9. Any other water appliance should be flushed (i.e. washing machines).
10. If a church has air conditioning and condensers, then they should take separate advice from their maintenance contractor.
11. All inspections and flushing operations should be recorded on a [register](#).

If a building has remained empty for a period of time, then there is a risk that the systems are infected. Therefore, when flushing the systems, ensure that spray and water particles aren't breathed in (wear a mask or stand well clear of the running water and run shower heads into buckets or containers).

Legionella Testing

If the water system **has not** been flushed weekly as described above, then a **test is essential** before re-opening the building. Even if accepted practice has been followed as outlined above, since church buildings of varying ages and conditions, there may still remain some risk, and therefore it is very strongly advised that a test is carried out before reopening. This should be considered as part of any checks and risk assessments and is a decision for the Managing Trustees.

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<p>If the managing trustees choose to have a test, the simplest test would be to gather 2 samples - one where the water enters the building and one where it exits. Please note that it is advisable to discuss if this is sufficient with the local service provider as each water system is different. Legionella Control have set out of code of conduct that would help in finding a suitable service provider. Tests can take up to ten days to be analysed and during this time water outlets producing mist should not be used. If the test is positive for the bacteria, then a chemical flush can be arranged.</p> <p>For more information, please refer to HSE's Guide on Legionella for Duty Holders.</p>		
<p>7. Organ Maintenance</p> <p>For a church with a larger or mechanically complex organ, prolonged lack of use will result in long-term problems with its performance. If an organist is available in the neighbourhood to keep all the action parts moving, it is appropriate for them to do so in a manner consistent with go.</p> <p>If an organist is not available, then the person performing the weekly inspection could carrying out the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Switch the organ on (consult with your regular organist, as every instrument is different) 2. Pull out all the stops (or press them down, if the instrument has stop tabs) 		

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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. One at a time, press every key (black and white) on each keyboard of the instrument, and all of the pedals. Note that the organ operates differently from a piano; keys should be pressed rather than struck. 4. If any faults occur, such as notes not sounding, or continuing to sound after the key has been released, make a note and consult with your organist or organ tuner. 5. Cancel all stops by pushing them in (or up for stop tabs). 6. Switch off the organ. <p>The purpose of this is to run through all the stops on all keyboards, and the pedalboard to keep leatherwork from sticking and keep electrical contacts clean.</p> <p>The person performing maintenance should update the maintenance register and the surfaces need to be sanitised in line with government guidelines and Historic England’s How to Clean Historic Surfaces (if applicable).</p>		
<p>8. Cleaning</p> <p>The building will need to have a good clean to bring it back into good working order. If no one has entered the building for 72 hours, then cleaning for Covid-19 is not required. For further information, read more on Cleaning Churches during Covid-19.</p> <p>If the building is listed, please refer to Historic England’s Guide to Cleaning Historical Surfaces. Cleaning of some historic objects will need extra care. Please speak with the Conservation Officer for further guidance.</p>		

<p>9. COVID-19 Risk Assessment</p> <p>After these initial checks, there will most likely need to be further changes to order to comply with government guidelines. The Covid-19 Risk Assessment will help you think through how to adhere to social distancing guidelines in the building and how to set up good hygiene and cleaning regimes. This form can be found on www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/.</p>		
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