

# Use of Candles

## Health and Safety Guide

### Intention

This brief subject-specific guide is intended to help you understand what you are required to do as a minimum to ensure the safe use of candles.

### What's the issue?

Candles pose a particular fire risk, especially at certain times of the year, such as Christmas, so it's wise to review your risk assessment procedures. Your assessment must take into account the risk that candles pose – especially to children – and the precautions you need to put in place. You are also required to record your assessment in writing.

Candles can be a cause of major fires and serious injuries if not used correctly. So it is important to remember to take common sense, simple precautions so that candles are used safely.

#### **Choice of candle**

Good quality slow-burning candles are best. Cheaper, catering quality candles will burn down quickly, and the flame may soon get dangerously close to foliage or decorations.

#### **Handheld candles**

Great care needs to be taken where the congregation are given candles to hold, especially where large numbers are involved. Apart from the risk of igniting service sheets etc., molten wax can cause damage to clothing and is very hot. Purpose-made candles are available, and should be used with proper slide on card drip trays. Where children are involved, even greater care is necessary. Children should be properly supervised and care taken to ensure that they do not stand too close together, or too close behind one another, as there's a risk of both clothing and hair being set alight.

#### **Placing of candles**

Candles must be kept well clear of all combustible materials including flammable decorations, foliage and electrical equipment. Ideally, candles should be placed in metal holders on non-combustible surfaces such as stone or brick. Candles should never be placed directly onto Christmas trees.

## **Fire extinguishers**

Every church should have at least two extinguishers of the appropriate type, and these should be examined and serviced at regular intervals. Water extinguishers are the most suitable for dealing with burning foliage, paper and wood, but must not be used on electrical equipment. Stewards must know where the extinguishers are and how to use them. Training can be provided either by your fire extinguisher supplier or the local Fire Brigade.

## **Fire blanket**

A fire blanket may be a better way of dealing with certain fire situations, and you should have at least one available for the service. They are particularly suitable for dealing with burning clothing.

## **Lighting**

Stewards should have torches so that any minor problems can be dealt with quickly without bringing on the main lights. But in the event of a fire, or other serious emergency, the main lights must be brought on immediately.

## **Procedures**

For large services where candles are used, it's strongly recommended that a team of stewards is appointed and that each person has specific duties in accordance with a list of written procedures.

A specific steward should be appointed to each door and must ensure that it opens easily before the service starts.

Similarly, responsibility for fire extinguishers should be given to specific stewards who know how to use them.

The person leading the service should be aware of the fire risk, and in the event of an emergency, be ready to ask everyone to leave in an orderly fashion following the directions of the stewards.

For large services, a trained first aider with first aid equipment should be available.

Candles must never be left burning when there is no responsible person left in the church and always check that all candles are extinguished before locking up

## **How can I get help?**

If you need clarification on any of this material, please contact your dedicated health and safety consultant. If your consultant is unavailable, please contact the health and safety helpline on 0845 226 8393.