



Annual Property Maintenance Inspection Supplementary Information

WHY COLLECT THIS INFORMATION?

As part of its commitment to creating a safe and healthy working environment and in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) and Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas), The Uniting Church in Australia, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (the Church) will ensure Church properties are maintained in a good and safe condition in order to reduce potential exposure to workers within workplaces and places of worship.

The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations also articulates the responsibilities of Presbyteries and Congregations in relation to the management of Church Property. The Synod Office is committed to providing Presbyteries and Congregations with tools and information to assist the Church in fulfilling its duty of care and legislative obligations.

By utilizing these tools and information, the Church can reduce the risk of injury and illness occurring within workplaces and places of worship through creating safer places for all workers and visitors.

Duty of Care

“The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (the Synod) (UCA) is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all workers such as employees, residents, clients, congregation members, visitors, contractors and volunteers”

Legislative & Regulatory Compliance

In addition to Church’s duty of care, the Church also has legal obligations to ensure health and safety and property management / maintenance detailed as follows:

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (Vic) and Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas) are designed to provide a broad framework for improving standards of workplace health and safety to reduce work-related injury and illness. They allow duty-holders to determine their approach to achieving compliance with the Acts.

Both Acts aim to:

- secure the health, safety and welfare of employees and other people at work;
- protect the public from the health and safety risks of business activities;
- eliminate workplace risks at the source; and
- involve employers, employees and the organisations that represent them in the formulation and implementation of health, safety and welfare standards.

Presbytery Property Committee

Regulation 4.3.1 (b)(v) of [The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations](#) states:

“A Presbytery Property Committee, subject to any relevant by-laws and directions of the Presbytery shall regularly inspect or arrange for the regular inspection of properties for which the Presbytery and Church Councils and other bodies within the bounds of the Presbytery are responsible and propose and report to Presbytery such action as may seem desirable to ensure that the properties are maintained in good and safe condition.”

Congregation Church Council

Regulation 4.4.1 of [The Uniting Church in Australia Regulations](#) states:

“Subject to the Regulations, the by-laws of the Synod and the rules of Presbytery, the Church Council shall be responsible for the management and administration of all property of the Church acquired or held for the use of the Congregation, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing shall:

(a) be responsible for the care and maintenance of property;

.....

(g) do such other things as are necessary or appropriate for the use and management of all property acquired or held for the Congregation.”



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To comply with these legislative and regulatory expectations each Presbytery and Congregation must ensure annual property inspections are conducted and property maintenance checklists are completed. Inspections must be completed of each Presbytery / Congregation property to identify issues relating to health and safety, property maintenance and insurance.

HOW SHOULD THIS INFORMATION BE USED?

This information should be used to identify property maintenance, health and safety concerns and other insurance exposures that may require attention within workplaces and places of worship.

Once completed, each Presbytery / Congregation should identify any risks or exposures and develop an action plan or steps to take in order to rectify or repair any areas of concerns at each property.

For assistance with developing action plans or any other queries in respect of the Annual Property Maintenance Checklist, please contact the Synod Office division appropriate to your query as outlined below:

Property Services

Telephone: (03) 9116 1956
Email: property@victas.uca.org.au

Occupational Health and Safety

Synod Safety Officer: Elnura Dulakovic
Telephone: (03) 9116 1949
Fax: (03) 9116 1499
Mobile: 0416 319 162
Email: Elnura.Dulakovic@victas.uca.org.au

Synod Safety Team Group Email

SynodOHS@victas.uca.org.au

A copy of the completed checklist and action plans needs to be retained on the Presbytery / Congregation records, with copies of each be forwarded to the Presbytery office and the Synod Occupational Health and Safety Team.

EXPLANATION OF QUESTIONS

Following is an explanation behind all questions on the Annual Property Maintenance Inspection Checklist:

GENERAL INFORMATION / DOCUMENTATION

1. Do you have an Occupational Health and Safety Policy?

An Occupational Health and Safety Policy is a commitment to providing a safe place for your workers, members and other visitors. The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has developed a policy that may provide direction if one is not in place.

2. Do you have an Asbestos Register?

All Church property including commercial tenancy built prior to 2004 must hold a current Asbestos Register. An asbestos materials register will include the date on which the asbestos, presumed asbestos or asbestos containing material (ACM) was identified, the location, type and condition of the asbestos at the time of inspection. The register will also state, where there is no asbestos or ACM present or if it is assumed likely to be present or not in an area that is inaccessible at the time of the asbestos audit. Where there is an active asbestos register, it must be reviewed by a qualified and competent asbestos consultant and updated every 5 years to meet legislative requirements. If no asbestos is found, the findings need to be documented and a register provided that says "NIL". A 'nil' asbestos register does not need to be reviewed every five years.





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3. If Asbestos is registered, is the location of all asbestos labelled?

A workplace must ensure the presence and location of asbestos or asbestos containing materials (ACM) is clearly indicated. The location of asbestos or ACM must be highlighted by a label or warning sign.

4. Has your Congregation adopted Child Safe Policies of the Uniting Church in Australia and signed the UCA Child Safe statement of commitment?

Culture of Safety provide a range of training modules and resources to assist congregations in complying with the mandatory policy and procedural requirements for Child Safety. Information is available online or in paper form. If you would like further information or assistance, please contact the Culture of Safety Department on 03 9116 1436.

5. Is a copy of the UCA VicTas Child Safe Policy readily available to all members and visitors including parents?

Each congregation needs to ensure that effective communication is implemented so that parents, carers and other parties are fully aware of your child and youth management strategy. Ensuring your child protection policy is readily available will assist in this regard.

6. When was Safe Church Training last provided to your children's and youth leaders?

All leaders must receive regular training in the policies and procedures for working with young people. Training records must be maintained and training needs to be ongoing (minimum of every 12 months). For Safe Church Training, please contact the Culture of Safety Department on 03 9116 1436.

7. Do you have an Essential Safety Measures Schedule?

Essential Safety Measures act as a first line of defense in the event of an emergency, such as a fire.

Church Councils should obtain a Maintenance Schedule determined by a Registered Building Surveyor for Church and Hall buildings and commercial tenancies. A Log Book records all maintenance attendance. An Annual ESM Report is required by law in Victoria and Tasmania.

Victoria

*AESMR template is available in line at the VicTas website www.victas.uca.org.au/resources/property/forms-and-resources/

Tasmania

Audits may occur by an authorized officer from the local council or by the Tasmanian Fire Service to ensure that the maintenance tasks have been undertaken, records will need to be available for inspection.

BUILDING ENVIRONMENT - INTERNAL/EXTERNAL

8. Is plant life blocking visibility of the property by passers-by or impending safe entry or exit from the property by vehicles or pedestrians?

Overgrown plants can affect member's entry and exit into the property as it can potentially cause trips, create fire hazards and increase the risk of car accidents or collisions between drivers and pedestrians. In addition, it can create a barrier behind which to hide presenting a possible security risk.

9. Are car parks and footpaths lit during night meetings?

Navigation of car parks and footpaths at night without adequate lighting can cause hazards as members are unable to see where they are going and what is in front of them.



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10. Is there security lighting in place and are there lights on throughout the night?

Security lighting is an effective form of protection for most buildings. It is an effective means of deterring intruders and vandals provided that it illuminates the entire property and not just the front. Motion sensor lights are a cost effective solution for side and rear alleys and will cause less aggravation to your neighbours.

11. Are paths and/or walkways free from trip hazards, including unlevel surfaces and other obstacles?

Navigation around trip hazards and other obstacles can put members at risk of injury. Clear paths and walkways enable smooth access to the property.

12. Is there disabled access into the facility (i.e. ramps)?

It is a requirement for properties to have access for disabled members to enter the property. It may be classed as discrimination if this service is not provided.

13. Are there any windows cracked or broken?

General maintenance such as this directly relates to the security of the property and puts the property at risk of being broken into. It also reflects poor maintenance.

14. Do all doors and windows open easily and shut completely?

Can put members at risk of injury if they have to exert considerable force to open and close windows. It also presents a security risk if the windows aren't secure.

15. Are floor surfaces, carpets or mats in good condition with no loose or worn material?

Poor maintenance of floor surfaces (holes and tears in carpets, mats, vinyl) can create trip hazards and potentially put members at risk of injuring themselves.

16. Are floor surfaces even, level and free from trip and slip hazards?

As stated in Q15, if floor surfaces are not properly maintained, it can create potential hazards for slips, trips and falls resulting in members sustaining an injury.

17. Are the internal/external steps/staircases in good condition and fitted with anti-slip tread and nosing?

It is important to ensure that steps and handrails are steady and free from cracks, paint flaking etc. If not, they can become a risk to members using them due to their instability or disrepair. Anti-slip tread and nosing prevents slipping should the surface become wet.

18. Are handrails or balustrades installed where required (i.e. on stairs or balconies with a fall of more than a metre)?

Handrails must be installed on all staircases or balconies that have a fall of more than a metre. They should also be installed to assist elderly/physically impaired members to climb stairs and/or ramps and prevent them from being put at risk of injury.

19. Are all aisles, exits and access ways clear of obstructions?

Navigation around obstructions in aisles and access ways can put members at risk of slips, trips and falls. Aisles and access ways must always be clear of obstructions.



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20. Are all electrical cords kept in a safe manner (i.e. clear of all aisles, exits and access ways, not dangling loosely from raised surfaces)?

If not stored or secured in a safe manner electrical cords can become a trip hazard. This can also lead to the cords being damaged or computers or other electrical items being damaged if accidentally pulled off a desk.

21. Are ceilings and walls in good repair (i.e. no water leaking, paint flaking, mould or mildew etc.)?

Flaking paint materials, mould and mildew can contain potentially harmful contaminants that can be inhaled by members in the property and can either exacerbate a members existing condition (such as asthma) or cause illness.

22. Have gutters been cleaned in the past six months and downpipes unblocked free to discharge water into the storm water drains?

Obstructed gutters can prevent the flow of water through the gutters and downpipes which may result in damage to the property (gutters rusting, clogged downpipes, water leaking internally). In addition to reducing the effective life of the guttering litter can increase the risk of fire spreading to buildings in bushfire prone areas.

23. Have drainage pits in carparks and other external areas been cleared of debris to protect against flood or backflow?

Having your drainage pits cleaned on regular basis will help to keep the property clean and safeguard the health and safety of persons at the property and other nearby residents. Flood water can cause severe damage to your property and the surrounding areas. Also, the water that regularly collects near the walls of your property can damage the foundations of the building. Drainage pits should be cleaned every 6 months in flood zones and 12 monthly in other zones.

24. Are building materials, timber pallets, cardboard, loose boards, bricks or tiles stored anywhere on the property?

Materials stored on the property can create potential hazards for members and young children accessing the property. Combustible materials stored outside the building have been used by arsonists to destroy property. Storing combustible materials inside sheds or buildings improves defenses against arson.

25. Are rubbish bins stored inside the buildings or secured away from the buildings?

Wheelie Bins can easily be pulled up alongside a building and the contents set alight causing significant damage to the building. Bins should be kept inside a building or chained in a secure location away from the building.

ELECTRICAL

26. Is a residual current device (RCD) or safety switch installed on each building?

Safety switches play a vital role in protecting your congregation members and other users of your facilities from electrocution. All buildings should be protected by a safety switch.

27. Have the RCDs been tested in the past six months?

Like all other safety devices, it is essential that RCDs are tested to ensure they will work when required. A push button test must be completed every 6 months and your electrician needs to complete a time test once a year.

28. Have there been any alternative energy systems (solar, wind etc.) installed at your property?

Workers need to be informed if solar panels are installed as they can pose a hazard. Even when the mains power is switched off energy will continue to be generated increasing the risk of injury and changing the manner in which fire departments will attack a fire.



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29. Are all light fittings, switches and power points clean and in good repair (i.e. not cracked, loose or fixed to walls properly)?

Cracked, loose fitting power points or switches not fixed to walls properly can put members at risk of electrocution when used. It can also be a fire hazard.

30. Are power boards used instead of household double adaptors?

Double adaptors or piggyback plugs create a potential hazard as leads and adaptors can become partially dislodged leaving a small gap for another metal object to make contact with the pins. They are actually prohibited in some workplaces by the [Electrical Safety Regulations](#). Power board should be used instead.

31. If power boards are in use are they limited to one board per outlet?

Overloading a power board or outlet is a fire risk. If more than one power board is attached to an outlet it is advisable to install additional outlets.

32. Are all power boards and extension leads in good condition (i.e. no frayed or wires exposed)?

Faulty cords or extension leads can put members at risk of electrocution and can also be a fire hazard.

33. Has all portable electrical equipment been inspected, tested and tagged by a qualified electrical worker?

Testing and tagging electrical appliances provides an additional level of electrical protection for your congregation. Electrical equipment is required to be regularly tested and then fitted with a tag by a qualified person.

34. Are appliances operating correctly and well maintained (i.e. fridges, microwaves)?

It is important to ensure that all appliances are in good working order and hygienically maintained to ensure members are not put at risk of injury or illness by using them.

VENTILATION AND AMENITIES

35. Are church members satisfied with the building ventilation (i.e. thermal comfort and air quality)?

Hazardous materials have a habit of escaping into the workplace air. Ventilation is all about maintaining the quality of air in the workplace to a level that is fit to breathe. In addition, varying temperatures can cause a member's body to experience stress such as heat stress in hot weather or lowering of blood pressure or a decreased heart rate in cold weather.

36. If property is air-conditioned, are filters and vents cleaned regularly and systems maintained by a qualified technician?

If not regularly cleaned, contaminants and dust particles escape into the workplace air can cause illness or may exacerbate existing medical conditions (such as asthma). Failing to clean the filters and vents can also result in a decline of the system's effectiveness and increased power costs. You should aim to have your cooling system serviced at least once every year.

37. Are property amenities hygienically cleaned (i.e. kitchen, toilets and showers)?

It is important to keep amenities hygienically cleaned. It ensures a state of well-being and prevents exposure to illness.

38. Is all furniture in a good and stable condition (i.e. chairs, pews etc.)?

Ensure all furniture is kept in good condition to prevent putting members at risk of injury (such as a chair breaking while being sat on).



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FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

39. Do all emergency exit doors have illuminated signage above the door?

Emergency exits are part of an essential emergency response plan. All your emergency exits need to be clearly marked by an illuminated exit sign. They must be clearly identified and free from obstructions at all times. If they are blocked you are putting members at risk.

40. Are all emergency exit doors of a single lever or push bar action to open?

The egress opening action of a lock must be a single handed downward lever action. A pushing action is also allowed, and is preferred.

Door handles should be at a height between 900 mm and 1100 mm above the floor level. Panic bars, and other similar controls that only need to be pushed, should be between 900 mm and 1200 mm above the floor. Handles on sliding doors shall be not less than 60 mm from the door jamb or doorstop when in the open or closed position.

41. All emergency exit doors are free of slide bolts, internal key locks, padlocks etc.?

Locking is not permissible on the egress side (inside) of the door. Exit doors must be free to release from the internal side, i.e. no internal key provision or other bolting mechanisms restricting emergency egress.

42. Are all fire extinguisher and fire hoses easily accessible?

All fire extinguishers and hoses (if applicable) must be easily accessible and free from obstruction in case of fire.

43. Have extinguishers, hose reel hydrants and fire blankets been serviced in the past six months or in accordance with the Essential Safety Measures Schedule?

You must ensure that all fire extinguishers are bi-annually tested, maintained and serviced by a competent person.

44. Do you have emergency lighting in addition to illuminated exit signs to ensure a safe evacuation during an evening meeting?

Emergency lighting systems are designed and installed as an essential safety measure. They provide visibility during power failure. It is also important to note the emergency lighting needs to be tested regularly to ensure it will operate if required. If it fails to work you are putting members at risk.

45. Have the signs and emergency lighting been tested in accordance with the Essential Safety Measures Schedule?

All emergency exit signs need to be inspected at 6-monthly intervals.

46. Are emergency and fire evacuation procedures clearly displayed?

Emergency and fire evacuation procedures need developed and displayed, generally in the vicinity of the exits, for each building. Information regarding the evacuation procedures should be provided to all users of the property.

47. Are leadership volunteers and workers trained in the evacuation procedures?

Workers and other key leaders of the congregation need to be conversant with the evacuation procedures. Training should be provided every 12 months.



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48. Has a fire drill been conducted in the past year?

Fire drills ensure workers and members are familiar with the procedure for evacuating and enable Fire Wardens to identify areas where the evacuation procedures may need to be refined. A fire drill should be conducted every 12 months.

49. Is there a first aid kit and is it accessible to all members?

It is a requirement for properties to have a fully stocked first aid kit on the premises to provide initial medical treatment to a member in the event of an injury.

50. Do you have designated first aid officers and are their details kept with the first aid kits and displayed on your safety notice board?

It is essential to the provision of a safe environment that qualified first aid officers have been identified and can take charge should the need ever arise. Keeping a list of your first aiders with the first aid kit on your OHS Notice Board will assist in ensuring the best people are assisting.

51. Are contents of the first aid kit appropriate for the property and regularly checked and maintained? (consider additional equipment in bushfire or flood zones)

A risk assessment should be conducted to determine the size of the first aid kit. The kit should be checked on regular basis (quarterly as a minimum) to re-stock any used items or discard items out of their use by date.

52. Are first aid kits appropriately labelled (i.e. marked with a white cross and green background)?

First aid kits should be clearly marked with a white cross on a green background and a sign of the same nature fixed to the cupboard or door to identify where the kit is stored.

INSURANCE AND SECURITY

53. Have there been any security issues during the year? If so, have they been resolved?

Security Issues include incidents where property has been stolen, or alternatively when there has only been attempted forced entry. If your congregation has sustained multiple incidents, what measures have you put in place to reduce further losses?

54. Is there a security alarm installed? In the additional comments field please advise whether it is a local alarm or monitored by security.

A security alarm provides an additional level of security. A monitored alarm is going to be more effective than a local alarm as someone is being notified of a break-in. Local alarms may work if your neighbours are looking out for your property.

55. Is the computer and multimedia equipment secured?

Valuable portable goods, where practicable, should be kept in a special room, or enclosure that can only be accessed by authorised persons. Musical instruments (apart from pianos and organs – heavy instruments) should not be left in worship areas during the week, or between services.

56. Are computer systems regularly backed up, and backups kept off-site?

It is essential that regular computer data is backed up regularly to ensure the data is not lost due to computer malfunction or loss of the machine. Back-ups need to be stored off-site to ensure that in the event of a major hazard such as a fire you still have access to the back-ups.



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57. Has your key register been reviewed in the past 12 months? In the additional comments fields please advise how many people have keys to the property.

Managing the number of keys to your property that are in circulation assists in improving the security of your buildings. A key register enables you to quickly identify who holds keys to the buildings. The register should be reviewed regularly and keys returned by people who no longer require regular access as part of their role within your congregation.

58. Are the facilities regularly used by other church groups, agencies or the general community?

This question takes into consideration the use and safety of our properties, but more importantly the higher duty of care responsibility we have to our tenants.

Secondly, is the Church incurring additional liability exposure from the activities being conducted by our tenants?

59. Is there a current UCA-endorsed hire agreement in place with all groups who use the property?

Hiring agreements should be signed by all groups wishing to utilise your facilities. Hiring agreements will assist you to hold hirers legally responsible for any damage they may cause.

As a further precaution a bond might be obtained upfront which can be refunded upon inspection after the event.

It is recommended that hiring agreements be used for long and short term hiring of your buildings and equipment. The Property Services Team in the Synod Office can provide further information in this regard.

CHILD SAFETY

60. Do children attend your church?

It is important to determine if the property is child safe if they regularly attend the property.

61. Has work been undertaken to make the environment child safe?

What measures have been taken by your congregation to make the property child safe? Have you created a safe play area? Has shade been provided? Are door handles out of reach of young children?

62. Do all cupboards and drawers that store sharp and hazardous materials (i.e. cutlery, glass, and plastic bags) have child resistant catches?

It is important to take whatever precautions possible to reduce the risk of children harming themselves by inadvertently accessing items that can be dangerous to young people.

63. Are electrical and gas appliances, particularly kitchen appliances and power tools, inaccessible to children?

All power tools should be locked away when not in use. Is your kitchen off limits to children? If you use gas heaters what measures have been taken to keep children away from the appliances?

64. Are safety plugs used in all power points that are not being utilised?

Safety plugs are designed to reduce the risk of electrocution through objects being pushed into an outlet. If power boards are in use safety plugs should be installed in unused points as well. This is even more important in power boards devoid of individual switches as all points will be active as soon as the power board is turned on.



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65. Are all sources of hot and boiling water inaccessible to children?

How is tea and coffee supplied to your attendees? Do people help themselves or are they served? If urns are accessible to everyone are they out of reach of children and set on fixed shelves or cabinets. Avoid placing an urn or kettle on a table that children are also accessing.

66. Are all chemicals, fuels and hazardous substances securely stored?

All chemicals, fuels and hazardous substances needs to be locked away after use. Areas where this can sometimes be overlooked include under the sink in the kitchen (detergents and insecticides), amenities (cleaning products) and vestries (Brasso, oils and cleaning products).

67. All hazardous substances and dangerous goods properly labelled and stored in accordance with the Safety Data Sheet (SDS)?

A Safety Data Sheet (SDS) provides information relating to the safe storage and use of hazardous substances. They also provide essential first aid information on appropriate action to be taken should a substance be ingested.

68. If applicable, is the children's playground and its equipment free from hazard and debris and regularly inspected and maintained?

Regular inspections of playgrounds and playground equipment need to be undertaken to ensure the equipment is in good operating order, safety measures such as soft fall are in the correct areas and the playground is free from hazard.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

69. Is there a Register of Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods stored on site?

The [Occupational Health and Safety Regulations / Work Health and Safety Regulations](#) require that a Register is prepared and maintained for all Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods utilised at your property.

70. Do leadership volunteers and workers know where to obtain information for substance use and emergency response?

Volunteers and workers must be given adequate information about the chemicals in their workplace.

71. Have volunteers and workers been trained in safe handling, spillage, storage and disposal of chemicals?

Workers and volunteers must be provided with any necessary information, instruction, training or supervision to enable them to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health.

72. Are Safety Data Sheets available for all hazardous substances and dangerous goods in use at the property? Current?

Workplaces must keep copies of Safety Data Sheets for all hazardous substances and dangerous goods they use and they must be readily accessible for all workers involved in using, handling or storing the chemical at the workplace, emergency service workers, and anyone else who may be exposed to the chemical.

73. Have assessments been undertaken for all hazardous substances and dangerous goods used on site to ensure they are stored and used in accordance with requirements?

If unsure how to control a risk associated with the use of a hazardous substance, a risk assessment of the substance is necessary.