



UNDERSTANDING ESSENTIAL SAFETY MEASURES

A commitment to safety is consistent with the Gospel imperative 'to care for our neighbours'.





What are the Responsibilities of Church Council?

Church councils are required under legislation to ensure all Essential Safety Measures are maintained and logged so that the fire and life safety items installed or constructed in a building will continue to provide for the health and care of people over the life of the building.

What are Essential Safety Measures (ESM)?

ESM include all traditional building fire services such as sprinklers, mechanical services and include passive fire safety measures such as fire doors, fire rated structure etc, and other building infrastructure items such as paths of travel to exits. These are specific to the type of use, size, structure and fixtures of a building as determined on the ESM maintenance schedule prepared by a registered building surveyor.

What is an Essential Safety Measure?

- Path of travel to exit doors
- Discharge from exit doors to public road
- Emergency lighting (where the floor area of church and hall buildings exceed 300m²)
- Exit signs
- Emergency power supply
- Fire extinguishers
- Air handling or mechanical ventilation
- Fire detectors and alarm system
- Fire hydrants
- Fire hose reels
- Fire control panel
- Fire isolated stairs, passageways and ramps
- Fire indices for materials
- Fire resisting structures
- Fire windows
- Emergency lifts
- Emergency warning systems
- Fire rated control joints
- Penetrations in fire rated structures
- Smoke alarms
- Smoke control systems
- Sprinkler systems

Why Do They Need to Be Maintained?

The objective of maintenance is to ensure that every ESM continues to perform at the same level of operation that existed at the time of commissioning to ensure the safety of persons gathering or in tenanted buildings.

ESM Involves:

- ▶ Ensuring the service is maintained at a level of performance specified by the building surveyor, usually to the National Construction Code (NCC) or an Australian Standard.
- ▶ Arranging periodical inspections and checks by professional service contractors in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards.
- ▶ Maintaining a record of the maintenance inspections and checks in the form of an annual report.

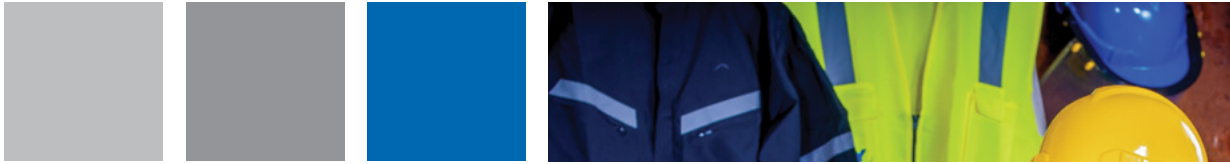
Can Church Councils Pass the Responsibility of ESM to Tenants?

No – to comply with the legislation church councils must maintain all safety fittings, equipment and safety features as well as those items listed as Essential Safety Measures. There are different obligations under the legislation dependent on when the building was built or when building work occurred on that building and the state in which the property is located. Obligations differ for:

- ▶ buildings constructed or altered since 1 July, 1994
- ▶ buildings constructed prior to 1 July 1994
- ▶ requirements for use or class of building.

Buildings Built Before 1 July 1994

Church councils must keep records of maintenance checks, safety measures and repair work so a municipal building surveyor or chief officer of the fire brigade can inspect them.



Check with UCA Property Services for assistance if an Essential Safety Measures Maintenance Schedule is not currently prepared for church buildings. It is important to obtain a schedule from a registered building surveyor to see what is needed to comply with the regulations.

Buildings Constructed or Altered Since 1 July 1994

Where a church or missional building has been constructed or altered after 1 July, 1994, the list of Essential Safety Measures, including their performance level, frequency and type of maintenance required is set out on the occupancy permit or certificate of final inspection issued by the building surveyor.

This document should be framed and placed in a prominent position approved by the building surveyor. The church council is responsible for preparing the annual Essential Safety Measures report.

What Happens if a Church Council Does Not Comply?

Non-compliance could place not only building occupants at risk but also those of passers-by and the occupants of adjoining buildings.

Arranging regular maintenance checks is the best means of ensuring that fire and life safety systems will operate reliably in an emergency.

In June 2018 Building Regulations were updated. The new regulations have increased penalties raising wider community awareness of the necessity to maintain Essential Safety Measures. Maintenance log books must be retained for 10 years.

Action Items for Church Councils

- ▶ Ensure an Essential Safety Measures Schedule is prominently displayed.
- ▶ Maintain a log of all maintenance and safety checks.
- ▶ Prepare an Annual Essential Safety Measures Report to the approved form confirming all scheduled checks have been completed.
- ▶ When a building is undergoing refurbishment ensure that any changes to the building, or a change to the type of use of the building, maintains a compliant maintenance schedule.

Help is available. Contact Property Services to connect to specialist ESM servicing contractors.

