

Introduction:

All ministries of The Wesleyan Church of Canada/Maine have both a moral and a legal responsibility to ensure those under our care, especially the most vulnerable, can attend, serve, and participate in the ministries of the church in a reasonably safe environment. While it is impossible to anticipate and avoid every possible dangerous scenario or situation which could result in harm to people, it is never-the-less the responsibility of church leaders to proactively take steps to reduce the likelihood that someone will be injured in our midst. This includes protecting parishioners, but also extends to safeguarding staff, visitors and those who deliver goods/services, midweek, to our churches and specialized ministries.

Although the national or district offices have no authority to dictate what a local church does (related to health and safety), what follows is a list of suggestions a local church might want to frequently inspect, to ensure their local church is complying with applicable safety standards (Disc. 315:6; 782:25.) It is our strong recommendation that churches stay aware of local and provincial health/safety standards and consult with their own legal counsel. Further, the Trustee committee should be tasked with regularly inspecting all aspects of their property OR that they set up a trained health and safety inspection team to monitor the church or specialized ministry's equipment and facilities and keep records of those inspections on file for 2 years.

The inspection should include reviewing a 'safety inspection training video' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRXKupvndrE) and consultations with the volunteers and staff who actually serve in the various areas of the church (i.e.: those who work in the Office, Nursery, Kitchen or youth room, etc.). The following definitions (modified: New Brunswick Hazard Communication system) may be used in helping to determine the level of urgency needed in responding to the inspection.

CLASS A (Major): Likely to cause permanent illness, disability, loss of life and/or extensive loss of building structure, equipment or materials. Intolerable Risk: Repairs/Replacements are done immediately.

CLASS B (Serious): Likely to cause serious illness, injury, temporary disability or disruptive property damage. Substantial Risk: Repairs/replacements will be done in the very near future, within days.

CLASS C (Minor): Likely to cause minor, non-disabling injury or non-disruptive property damage, Moderate Risk: Repairs/replacements are planned on a longer-term basis, within weeks to months.

Inspection Date: _____

Names of those on the inspection team: _____ , _____ , _____

FACILITIES:

INSPECTION	Fix/Repair/Replace Immediately	Fix/Repair/Replace within 1 month	Fix/Repair/Replace within 3 months	ACCEPTABLE	N/A	Resolved Date
1. Snow/Ice are removed from all entrances/sidewalks and driveways in a timely manner.						
2. Does the church have a winter sand/salt box outdoors and a winter shovel?						
3. Snow/ice and debris are removed from all exits from the church (inside and outside), allowing safe/quick exits in the case of a fire or need for evacuation.						
4. A sufficient number of fire extinguishers are clearly mounted, fully charged, unobstructed, and identified throughout the facilities (as required by the local authority having jurisdiction).						
5. A sufficient number of "First Aid" kits are kept visible, fully stocked, and easily accessible, especially in the children's ministry area, kitchen (burns), by the front door, and office areas. This includes having bandages, gaze, tape, antiseptic wipes,						

scissors, tweezers, rubbing alcohol, Q-tips, cotton balls, etc.						
6. Have working flashlights in the classrooms, church lobby, kitchen, sanctuary, office, etc.						
7. Any 'uneven' flooring in the church? Broken or worn floorboards?						
8. Uneven 'steps' (too high or too short) which are marked with yellow paint/ safety tape.						
9. Smoke/heat AND carbon monoxide detectors are properly located and fully operational.						
10. Emergency exit lighting is tested and fully operational (batteries checked)						
11. Exit signs are large enough and clearly visible to ensure people know how/where to exit the building in a time of fire/smoke or evacuation.						
12. Has the church established a 'muster' point for where parents can find their children during/after an evacuation?						
13. If the main entrance to the church was blocked with a fire, how would a person in a wheelchair exit the church?						
14. All floors, especially in the entrance, washrooms and stairwells, are 'non-slip.'						

15. Are the aisle ways in the main sanctuary wide enough for 2+ adult people to walk side-by-side?						
16. If tile floors have recently been washed or waxed, does the church put up warning signage for slippage?						
17. All carpets and mats are properly installed AND not-frayed, to ensure non-slip or trip hazard.						
18. Stairwells and steps (including onto the platform) are non-slip, kept well lit, and without obstacles or dangers of falls.						
19. Handrails are properly mounted, at the correct height ... both in stair wells, and onto the platform. This includes double checking the safety requirements of balcony railings to ensure they meet the applicable code requirements ie. strength / height.						
20. Kitchen and bathrooms area are free from poisons and toxic chemicals/elements (or locked to ensure they are not accessible to children). This is especially important for cleaning substances.						
21. Kitchen area is free from <i>outdated</i> food/drink items.						

<p>22. Kitchen vents/filters (over stove) cleaned, especially from grease. Is the microwave leaking microwaves & properly vented?</p>						
<p>23. No evidence of rodents/ insects because of improperly stored or disposed of food/substances.</p>						
<p>24. Kitchen area: fridges and freezers are keeping food at proper temperatures.</p>						
<p>25. Testing of the buildings fire alarm system (pull stations).</p>						
<p>26. Install motion activated security cameras in the interior of the church, while it is closed. Outdoor motion detection lighting.</p>						
<p>27. Kitchen area has clear signage for the proper handling and preparation of food, and for washing of dishes/ utensils/ hands.</p>						
<p>28. Kitchen area has a fire suppression system, (over the oven/stove) that is inspected annually.</p>						
<p>29. Cooking and cleaning supplies CLEARLY and correctly labeled.</p>						
<p>30. Are there people in the congregation who have severe food allergies (is the kitchen free from those items)</p>						

31. Kitchen area: access to sharp knives is secure from children.						
32. Kitchen area and furnace double checking for 'gas leaks' or 'oil leaks.'						
33. Electrical room is kept clear of ALL items (especially combustible items) and the doors of the panel are kept shut.						
34. Are there any 'tripping' hazards in hallways? (waste baskets, mats, toys, etc.)						
35. Washrooms have at least one handicapped access stall (incl. properly mounted grab rails & a lower sink). Additionally, all access doors swing freely and easily, or have an electric opening option.						
36. Wall outlets in the children's ministry area, have the electrical outlets properly covered to ensure children can't be electrocuted.						
37. Boxes in storage rooms are not piled over 5ft. high, with the heaviest boxes/items on the bottom (not the top).						
38. Chairs are stacked in a stable manner (typically not stacked more than 5, to an absolute max. of 8). Similarly, ensure 'stored' tables are not leaning against						

a wall in a manner that makes them subject to falling onto children or the elderly.						
39. Shelves and filing cabinets are stable (ideally: properly secured to the wall / structure, thus not easy to tip, nor to climb upon). The heaviest items should be in/on the lowest levels. This includes inspecting the church library to ensure library shelves are securely mounted.						
40. Are there step stools or ladders, readily available for people to reach items on high shelves?						
41. No toxic plants in the building (children eating leaves).						
42. No toxic plants outdoors (i.e. no poison ivy, poison birch, etc.).						
43. Any indoor or outdoor play structures are safe and stable. This includes a safe/cushioned landing area for swings and slides. Nothing to pinch fingers.						
44. Are 'swinging' doors (if any) clearly marked, and with windows (swing both directions).						
45. Are vents/duct work in the floor or walls (furnace/air exchangers) cleaned from dust/ noxious smells.						

46. The nursery has a system in place for identifying/ connecting 'which baby goes with what baby bag'.						
47. Any 'sharp' corners/points which might endanger a child or elderly person who falls onto the cabinet/table, etc. Incl. watching for protruding nail heads/ wires.						
48. Are toxic, poisonous or flammable waste materials being disposed of properly and promptly.						
49. Are the desks/chairs/tables in the office, kitchen, and children's ministry area, kept in good repair (not likely to break or fall apart).						
50. Church lawncare equipment is properly maintained (eg. lawnmower, hedge clippers, and snowblowers, etc.) and kept secure from children accessing them.						
51. If the church has a workshop are all saws, drills, etc. kept in proper working condition, and are not accessible to children.						
52. A professional sound tech person is employed once every two years to ensure the church p.a. system is not exceeding acceptable audio levels (for both the congregation & musicians) &						

stage lighting is not harming the eyesight of those on the platform.						
53. Ensure p.a. speakers are <i>securely</i> mounted to the ceiling or walls.						
54. Ensure the 'trap doors' in the platform for accessing p.a. hook-ups, are kept covered (no trip or falls).						
55. The parking lot has clear signage for first time visitors (handicapped and visitor parking; direction/flow of traffic).						
56. The parking lot has sufficient lighting for night-time/evening usage. Walkways/sidewalks have adequate lighting.						
57. Parking lot has an identified 'children's cross walk' area and proper signage.						
58. Ensure 'fire doors' are properly rated AND are never propped open, nor the access is obstructed.						
59. Posting of a health/safety poster in the main office. (e.g.: Ontario requires certain posters on a Health and Safety bulletin board).						
60. Every second year have a professional / qualified contractor inspect the facilities for mold spores, especially in the nursery, children's area and the						

washrooms. Are inspection results documented and kept on site in a Health/Safety binder or file?						
61. If the church uses well water, is the water tested regularly for bacteria, pollutants, noxious substances, lead etc.? Find out what is required in your jurisdiction. Some communities require testing every 3 months. Is documentation of the testing kept on site?						
62. How does the church ensure that personal items that are left in the coats, in the coat racks, etc. are not being stolen during public worship times?						
63. When was the last time the church was checked for asbestos in the walls or ceilings? Is there documentation of testing available on site?						
64. Annual cleaning of the water fountains (if any).						
65. The nursery and children's ministry area has a functional 'check in' system for receiving and releasing children at all events.						
66. The nursery and toys are sanitized after each event, and the diaper pail is emptied.						

67. Nursery: where possible, install a 'half-door' so parents can always look in to see if their children are safe.						
68. Easy access for wheelchairs to the entire facility (especially entrances, washrooms, office, and the main ministry areas).						
69. Hot water temperature coming out of taps (e.g. kitchen, bathrooms, etc.) cannot burn / injure any person.						
70. Does the church have an extra wheelchair/ crutches available, should they be required? Are they regularly inspected? Is the inspection documented ?						
71. Annual documented training for the ushers/greets in First Aid and C.P.R.(Defib ??)						
72. Easy access to a defibrillator (and the training for the ushers/greeters).						
73. Easy access to an Epi-Pen (allergic reaction medication). Are there trained people on site (to administer Epi)? Is the expiry date of the Epi-Pen checked monthly?						
74. Lighting rods on the roof (inspected annually?)						
75. Proper and secure storage of 'trash' outside of the church.						

<p>76. Outdoor storage units/sheds are fire resistant and at least 3 meters from the church building / other structures. Flammable gases/substances are stored in proper containers / quantities.</p>						
<p>77. Church maintenance staff & volunteers have protective clothing (e.g.: ear protection, eye protection/glasses, gloves, safety vests, etc.)</p>						
<p>78. Church maintenance staff & volunteers have been properly trained on church-owned equipment (riding lawnmowers, snow blower, weed-eaters, gas powered edgers, hedge trimmers, tools, equipment, etc.).</p>						
<p>79. Church fences are in good repair.</p>						
<p>80. Trees and shrubs are not rubbing against the church building, nor overhanging neighbour's property.</p>						
<p>81. Church eavestrough/ downspouts discharge water 2 metres from the basement/foundation.</p>						
<p>82. Inspect to ensure nothing can 'fall' from the roof striking people / objects on the ground (lose shingles, branches, etc.)</p>						

<p>83. No extension cords where people may trip over them, AND the extension cords must not be overloaded (ie. too many devices plugged in). And no extension cords which are frayed, nor UNDER carpets/rugs, etc.</p>						
<p>84. The basement windows of the church have fixed security bars or 3M security film installed.</p>						
<p>85. Inspect the building for any exposed wires, faulty light switches and/or flickering light fixtures, etc. anywhere inside or outside of the building.</p>						
<p>86. Parking spaces too close together (thus damaging the doors of other cars) or making parking and backing up, difficult or dangerous.</p>						
<p>87. Parking lot does not have potholes, or tripping obstacles, damaged curbs, etc.</p>						
<p>88. Glass in the windows and doors are 'safety' glass (i.e. will not break into shards).</p>						
<p>89. Extra protection on the windows on the second floor, to ensure children can't break through and/or fall through a window (this includes windows in or near the stairwells).</p>						

90. Furnace filters are annually replaced (or more often).						
91. Hot water heater/tank annual inspection. Documentation is kept on site.						
92. Ground fault receptacles are provided (with weather protective coverings), especially in areas which have moisture on the floor and/or are located outdoors.						
93. Annual inspection of propane/oil tanks (if any). Documentation is kept on site.						
94. Annual HVAC professional inspection (including air exchangers). Ensure proper fan guarding to eliminate any person's fingers (especially children) access to a moving fan blade)						
95. Sump pump is annually checked to ensure it is working properly. Documentation is kept on site.						
96. If the church has a septic weeping bed, have an inspection every second year. Keep document on-site.						
97. Window air conditioning units are annually cleaned (the filter cleaned / replaced).						
98. Windows in all office and classroom doors, etc. (to						

reduce likelihood of sexual abuse/accusations).						
99. The timers for turning on outdoor lights, is kept current/up to date.						
100. Annually invite the local fire department to do an inspection and make recommendations.						
101. Every second year, invite a building inspector to tour the building and make recommendations.						
102. If the church owns any vehicles, these vehicles must be inspected annually (by a qualified professional) for safety concerns, and immediately rectified (incl. weather appropriate tires)						
103. No one is allowed to drive children/teens to or from any church sanctioned events IF the driver has had ANY driving offenses in the last 2 years (including speeding).						
104. Are extra safety precautions put in place whenever the church uses lit candles or open flames (i.e. Christmas Eve or campfires, etc.). Are a sufficient fire extinguishers positioned close-by, with someone trained to operate the extinguisher, during events?						

<p>105. Whenever youth/children's events are taking place, is there adequate supervision available: Typically 1 adults to 3 infants; 1 adult to 4 preschoolers; 1 adult to 6 elementary; 1 to 12 teens?)</p>						
<p>106. Older children/teens should not be 'playing and interacting with younger children' ... especially if they are not closely supervised, or if the context is 'competitive' type sports/activities.</p>						
<p>107. If there is any type of renovations happening to the facilities, the area should be secured / off limits to keep children/teens away from dangers, etc.</p>						
<p>108. Are all lockable doors (especially exterior doors) easy to close and secure? Do the panic bolts and door closers work properly?</p>						
<p>109. Does the church have a building fire suppression system (sprinkler system)? Is it working properly? Is it inspected and tested yearly by a qualified contractor?</p>						
<p>110. If the church has water sprinkler system (fire suppression) is there anything near the sprinklers which would diminish their effectiveness</p>						

OFFICE & STAFF

INSPECTION	Fix/Repair/Replace Immediately	Fix/Repair/Replace within 1 month	Fix/Repair/Replace within 3 months	ACCEPTABLE	N/A	Resolved Date
1. The church office has an 'incident/accident binder' in which records are retained of injuries or potential lawsuit issues.						
2. The church office has a binder, in which Police checks/Criminal Records/Vulnerable persons safety records are confidentially recorded and updated. Is the binder in a secure place?						
3. The church office has a binder in which the dates/times and names of those who attended 'Sexual harassment/sexual abuse' avoidance policies were taught and annually reiterated. Is the						

binder in a secure place?						
4. The church office has a binder in which the dates/times and names of those who attended 'Discipline of children' policy training events, are recorded (annual training/reminders). Is the binder in a secure place?						
5. The church office has a health/safety binder which records the dates and extent and results of <u>ALL</u> facility and equipment safety inspections.						
6. A policy and practice is in place, to ensure a single female staff member is not left alone in the building, without the exterior doors being locked and a system in place to monitor who has access to the building.						

<p>7. If the church keeps 'petty cash' in the office, the box is kept out-of-view and secure. The church should NOT keep offerings/financial giving in the office overnight, at any time, unless it has a safe.</p>						
<p>8. The doors/walls of the office in which 'pastoral counseling' is conducted, are sound-proof OR there is 'white noise' machine to drown out the conversations.</p>						
<p>9. Does the church have in place affordable and adequate health, life and disability and retirement plans for all paid staff (especially full-time staff)</p>						
<p>10. Do all staff have 'lockable' desk drawers and filing cabinets in which to keep confidential correspondence</p>						

<p>about people in the church? Do the staff lock these files away from prying eyes?</p>						
<p>11. Does the church have policies and practices in place for the confidential reporting of harassment against staff?</p>						
<p>12. Does the church communicate that private information about parishioners, is to be kept confidential by the pastoral/office staff (including financial giving, counseling sessions, contact information, health info., etc.) Is the information kept in a secure place?</p>						
<p>13. The church having proper and sufficient 'officers and directors' personal liability insurance.</p>						
<p>14. Church having sufficient, and up-to-date: property, fire, theft general liability insurance.</p>						

15. Church data stored securely off-site/in cloud daily.						
16. Office is well ventilated, with adequate heating & cooling.						
17. Office chairs are comfortable and in good repair.						
18. Staff have been regularly trained in CPR, defibrillator, and fire extinguishing equipment. Are there records of training available on site?						

SPIRITUAL SAFETY

INSPECTION	Fix/Repair/Replace Immediately	Fix/Repair/Replace within 1 month	Fix/Repair/Replace within 3 months	ACCEPTABLE	N/A	Resolved Date
1. Annually require all people serving in all capacities in and through the church to attend a meeting where the church's: safety protocols; sexual abuse; sexual harassment; child discipline protocols & policies						

are reviewed and reiterated.						
2. Annually require all those serving in leadership roles, to submit a 'spiritual walk' survey that confidentially asks probing questions about their current relationship with God, character issues and willingness to abide by and support the churches doctrinal statements and life-style expectations.						
3. All teaching materials, including those taught in small groups, must be reviewed by a paid pastor for alignment with church doctrines.						
4. Does the church have a policy in place, restricting lay people from using the phrase "God told me to tell you ...", without first vetting the message through one of the paid pastoral staff.						

<p>5. Does the church have a policy in place requiring leaders to never use the phrase “Be submissive to my authority ...” This is in fact authoritarian ‘subjection’, not biblical submission. Submission can only be freely offered, it can never be demanded.</p>						
<p>6. Does the church have in place a policy restricting the paid pastoral staff from asking for or suggesting donations or gifts from lay people in the church. This includes not using their position to advance their private for-profit, personal businesses.</p>						
<p>7. Does the church have in place a policy, requiring staff and volunteer leaders from not using social media to be in contact with</p>						

minors, for any purpose other than to promote church related activities.						
8. For all off-campus activities, having clearly communicated behavioral expectations communicated to those who attend (i.e. retreat, field trip, visit to concert)						
9. For all off site events, having parents fill out a parental permission slip for their children/teens to attend/participate.						
10. Does the church have a clear policy for what leaders are to do, if they suspect a child or vulnerable adult is being abused?						
11. Never allowing anyone to work with children/teens, until they have completed a criminal background check, attended a sexual abuse/harassment						

training event, and had the criminal background check reviewed and filed by one of the pastoral staff.						
12. Two adults in a room, whenever a child is present.						

OFTEN OVERLOOKED:

INSPECTION	Fix/Repair/Replace Immediately	Fix/Repair/Replace within 1 month	Fix/Repair/Replace within 3 months	ACCEPTABLE	Resolved date
1. Churches (like schools) ARE expected to have fire evacuation plans and to practice them at least once per year. Make a plan (including how to get infants out of the nursery, and toddlers out of the Sunday school classrooms safely) and designate a 'meeting/muster' place for parents to find their children. Do a fire evacuation on a Sunday morning, and forewarn your church family and coordinated all this with your local fire department.					

Disclaimer: The information contained in this checklist has been compiled by The Wesleyan Church of Canada to assist our denominational churches and specialized ministries and their leaders in better understanding legal liabilities, and to help in reducing or eliminating foreseeable and preventable risks associated with their ministries, programs, property, equipment, operations and events. However, your organization may have requirements and risks that are unique to your premises or operations which are not addressed by this checklist and should be specifically reviewed with the appropriate qualified professional.

