



## **Health and Safety Policy for Wattisfield United Reformed Church, Chapel Road, Wattisfield , Suffolk IP22 1PJ (January 2026)**

**Overall and final responsibility for health and safety at Wattisfield URC is that of the Elders: Andrew Wright, Adrian Black and Michael Watson and the Church Leader: Jo Patel (07808 487844)**

The Eldership of this church is committed, so far as is reasonably practicable, to providing a safe and healthy environment for its volunteers, church members, all involved in church activities and everyone using the premises.

Although churches do not generally present significant safety concerns, it is important that hazards are identified, risks assessed and action taken where necessary.

Health and Safety is about reducing the chance of someone being harmed. It is about eliminating risk where possible and where appropriate managing it. Awareness and training are paramount.

This policy outlines how this can be achieved and incorporates the requirements of the:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (and the regulations made under it.)
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Food Safety Act 1990, and EU food hygiene law (as interpreted by the Food Standards Agency).

The policy will of course be most effective if all church members, volunteers and other church attendees, and those who participate in church activities or use its premises, do the following:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do or not do
- Cooperate with the church on health and safety
- Correctly use work items provided by the church (including personal protective equipment) in accordance with training and instructions
- Do not interfere with or misuse anything provided for health, safety or welfare.

## **1. To prevent accidents and provide adequate control of health and safety risks arising from church activities.**

### **Risk assessments**

Risk assessments will be completed for the church premises and church activities. Actions arising out of those assessments will be implemented.

They will include:

- A general risk assessment for the Church should be ongoing; especially Government Covid Guidelines for churches being followed and addressed as up-dates are announced.
- Specific risk assessments completed by the groups using the church for activities and events which they organise. These risk assessments will take account of children's changing needs as they grow and develop, and will be mindful of needs resulting from physical and learning disabilities and factors that may make some children and adults more vulnerable than others.
- Specific risk assessments completed for each off-site activity. If transport is organised by the Church, then the risk assessment will include travel arrangements and measures will be taken to ensure: qualified and safe drivers; roadworthy vehicles' suitable insurance cover; and use of seat belts or appropriate car seats or booster cushions.

Group / activity leaders should carry out a quick visual inspection of the area being used for their meeting / event / activity before starting, note any concerns, take whatever immediate action is possible to reduce the risk of harm, and report any concerns to the Church Elders as soon as possible after the event.

### **Electrical issues**

Misuse and abuse of electricity is a significant cause of fires and injury. All group leaders and volunteers must observe the following:

- Visually check all electrical equipment before use and report all faults found immediately to the responsible person.
- Do not attempt to use or repair faulty equipment
- Electrical equipment should be switched off and disconnected when not in use for long periods.
- Electrical equipment which is brought onto the premises and used should be tested by the approved person and entered onto the electrical equipment record.

- Flexible cables should be positioned and protected so that they do not constitute a tripping hazard and are not subject to mechanical damage.

## **Manual handling**

We will eliminate the need for manual handling as far as is reasonably practicable. Where it is not possible to avoid the need to move loads, we will carry out risk assessments and make use of lifting aids, including trolleys, as far as possible.

## **Contractors**

Anyone entering church premises for the purposes of carrying out work, other than an employee, member or volunteer of the church, will be regarded as a contractor. All contractors, including the self-employed, must abide by the following:

- Provide a copy of their own health and safety policy (where required by law)
- Provide evidence that they have appropriate Public and Employers' Liability insurance in place.
- Where plant and machinery are brought onto the church premises by contractors, they must be able to show where necessary that the equipment has been inspected and tested to ensure its safe operation
- Contractors may only use sub-contractors or persons other than their own direct employees with permission from the church. However, responsibility will remain with the contractors.
- All contractors will be given instructions regarding the areas where they are permitted to work, the extent of the work they are authorised to undertake, and any safety precautions they must take.

## **2. To provide adequate information and training to group leaders and volunteers, to ensure they are competent in their role.**

Leaders and volunteers will be given necessary health and safety information and provided with appropriate training, including training in the fire evacuation plan.

Other building users & organisations hiring the church premises, will be given necessary health & safety information, including a copy of this policy, fire risk assessment and evacuation plan and they will be reminded to do their own risk assessment of the premises.

## **3. To maintain the building in a safe and healthy condition**

- Basic provision for anyone using the building of cleanliness, adequate heating and lighting, ventilation, toilets, washing facilities and drinking water
- Regular inspection and maintenance of premises and the grounds.
- Regular inspection of the ease of access and movement around the premises, checking that doors and corridors are free from obstruction and trip hazards, especially emergency exits and evacuation routes.
- Regular checks on the general fabric of building.

Any defects are to be noted and reported to the Elders and procedures will be promptly put in place for repairs or removal of hazards. Where necessary, temporary measures are taken to minimise the risk of accident or injury until permanent repairs can be carried out.

#### **4. Regular inspection, testing and maintenance of equipment and machinery**

Regular inspection, testing and maintenance of any equipment or machinery ( eg ladders, mowers & other garden equipment, electrical equipment and sockets, heating and cooking appliances, children's play equipment, etc). Prompt action should be taken to address any defects.

The Inspection, testing and maintenance regime will include:

- A five yearly test of any portable electrical equipment (PAT test) by a competent person
- a five-yearly inspection and test of the fixed electrical system by a competent contractor.

Any necessary work required for safety will be implemented immediately.

#### **Storage and use of hazardous substances**

- Where possible, the storage and use of hazardous substances will be avoided.
- Any hazardous substances used on the church premises will be noted and stored safely
- Chemicals should not be stored in unmarked containers and should not be mixed.
- Hiring groups are not to bring any hazardous substances onto the church site without permission from the Church Elders.

#### **5. Food hygiene regulations governing the preparation and storage of foodstuffs will be followed.**

##### **Registration**

The church is registered with the Local Authority as part of the requirements to run Puddle Duck Café

## **Training**

We will ensure that all food handlers have received adequate instruction and are aware of good practice in food preparation, handling, storage, and disposal of waste.

## **Risk assessment**

We will ensure that the appropriate assessment of risks is carried out for the foods to be prepared and stored including storage at the correct temperatures. Extra care will be taken when preparing and serving food for under-fives, pregnant women, people with serious medical conditions and older people.

## **Hygiene**

Workers will follow good personal hygiene (eg hand-washing and hair-tying) and all surfaces coming into contact with food during preparation will be clean before use.

## **Outside organisations**

We will ensure that all hirers who wish to provide food of any kind, are advised of the facilities and procedures.

## **6. Basic first-aid provision will be available during church activities**

### **First aid kits**

A First-aid kit is kept on the premises on the window sill in the kitchen.

The use of first-aid equipment is to be reported to the Elders and the contents replenished as soon as possible.

### **Reporting accidents**

Church volunteers and leaders of other organisations using the church premises, should report incidents in the accident book. The book and all reported accidents will be reviewed regularly and any risks/hazards that are identified will be dealt with promptly.

## **7. Serious accidents and ill health on the premises are reported under RIDDOR regulations**

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations will be followed. Fatal accidents, major injuries and injuries which involve the injured person being absent from their work for more than seven days, must be reported to the enforcing authorities. Also diseases and certain dangerous occurrences, as defined by the regulations. These can be reported online at [www.hse.gov.uk/riddor](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor) and records kept by the Church.

See [www.hse.gov.uk/riddor](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor) for further details about these regulations including detailed definitions of what must be reported.

## **8. Church Elders check list of duties include:**

### **Monthly:**

Emergency exits and smoke alarms (visual and test buttons)  
Emergency lighting (Torches)  
Fire extinguishers (Visual)  
P.A.T. (visual)  
First aid box

### **Annual:**

PAT testing  
Fire extinguisher service  
Building fire risk assessment  
All hiring group's risk assessment  
Kitchen and food preparation area

### **5 years**

Survey for any health & safety issues  
Electrical wiring test and certificate

## **9. Review and monitoring of this policy**

This policy will be reviewed, monitored and revised by the Elders every 12 months (or sooner if church activities change significantly) and will be approved and adopted by the Church Meeting annually

Signed:

(Jo Patel)  
(Andrew Wright)  
(Adrian Black)  
(Michael Watson)

Date: 21/01/26

# **Fire and Emergency Evacuation Plan for Wattisfield United Reformed Church**

## **January 2026**

In case of emergency, requiring the building to be evacuated immediately, inform the church/event/group leader who will implement this plan to clear the building.

**Before any event begins the Group Leader must unlock both of the external exit doors and these must remain unlocked whilst people are in the building.**

Do not ignore the smoke alarms, there is no such thing as a false alarm, if the alarms sound, put this evacuation plan into immediate effect.

**Do not take personal risks. Only use fire extinguishers if there is no danger or to enable a safe exit.**

- **Fire extinguishers:** located in – Connie's room by the exit door. Fire blankets in kitchen
  - The church, to the right of the main exit doors
- **Assembly point:** Outside the building to the far side of the car park

### **Fire and Evacuation Plan**

Whatever activity is underway in the building the Group Leader must:

1. Assess the situation quickly, calmly & safely and alert everyone to the need for evacuation.
2. Ensure people are helped out of the building, using the nearest **safe** Fire Exit door either the main doors to the garden or the back door by the toilets, **to the car park**
3. Get everyone safely to the assembly point in **the far corner of the car park**
4. Call the emergency services on **999**.

Then check that all group participants have left the building and are at the assembly point. This will entail either themselves or a delegated responsible person, who knows the building, to do a physical check inside, **ONLY** if it is safe to do so.

The Group Leader must (or delegate a responsible person to) **phone 999** and ask for the Fire Brigade. Church address: **Wattisfield URC, Behind Harmer Place, Chapel Road IP22 1PJ**

The Group Leader must then

5. **Receive** confirmation from the other responsible person that the building is fully evacuated or understand where an area could not be safely checked.

6. **Liaise** with the Fire Brigade on their arrival.

**NO-ONE IS TO RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO BY THE FIRE BRIGADE.**

## **FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR WATTISFIELD UNITED REFORMED CHURCH January '26**

### **1. FIRE HAZARDS**

Have you found anything that could start a fire?

- We do not have naked flames in the kitchen. The oven is electric.
- There is a heat alarm in the kitchen to alert users to a potential fire.
- The church occasionally uses candles which are dealt with by responsible adults, using safety matches and positioned safely, away from curtains. The Elders or Group Leader are responsible for checking the building and making sure all candles are extinguished when everyone leaves and the building is locked.
- The red curtains in the main hall are hanging close to the electric heaters. To manage this risk we ensure that the curtains are pulled away from the heat source. The heaters are not left on overnight or when the building is empty. We ask that all users check the curtains are safely positioned and the heaters have switched off (via the timer) when they lock up the building.
- Rubbish is properly disposed of and the bins are left for collection appropriately, so they are never over full.
- The garden waste bin is treated in the same way and any overflow garden waste is stored away from the building or taken off site and disposed of appropriately.
- The building is well maintained and checked regularly for any fire risks.
- There are no flammable liquids stored in the building except household cleaning fluids, in the correct containers under the kitchen sink and in the cleaning cupboard. The dishwasher fluids are visible underneath the commercial dishwasher, so we will ask Hirers to risk assess this for their group, so that anyone in the kitchen area is made aware of this.

### **2. PEOPLE AT RISK**

Who could be at risk if there was a fire or an emergency evacuation?

- People who are less mobile, using walking frames and sticks, anyone who is sight or hearing impaired, who attend the Church services, the Café and other events being held in the building.
- We have wheel chair users attending
- Children may attend these activities, including babies in pushchairs

In the event of an evacuation

- The building does not require fire alarms, due to its size. Therefore, the evacuation alarm is raised by the sound of the smoke/heat detectors or by people alerting others by sound or touch or visual clues.
- The responsible adults present will provide help and stay calm, so that everyone can be guided out of the building as per the evacuation plan. This will be overseen by the Group

Leader at the time and it is their responsibility to make sure all leaders and helpers know the evacuation plan.

- Wheelchair users should be guided calmly or helped by their carer to evacuate safely and completely away from the building to the assembly point and away from the fire exit routes, to avoid obstruction.
- Children should be carried by parents or carers and if possible, pushchairs should be left behind, so as not to create a bottle neck on the evacuation routes. Stored pushchairs must be away from exit doors and routes.
- Anyone who may be injured before or during a fire should be removed from the building safely, helped appropriately and cared for by a responsible adult until the emergency services arrive.

### **3. RECORD AND REVIEW**

- If new electrical equipment is brought onto the site, it will be PAT tested as soon as possible and training in its use given to all users.
- The fire extinguishing equipment will be well maintained and serviced every year
- If there are any incidents at the premises, then a new risk assessment will be carried out by the Church Elders, and the Group Leaders for those who use the building will be made aware.
- This risk assessment will be reviewed annually by the Church Elders and a report given to the Annual Church Meeting. However, this risk assessment can be updated at any time. For example, if the building is changed or how it is used, or if anyone in the building draws attention to a risk not already noted.

Signed:

(Jo Patel)  
(Andrew Wright)  
(Adrian Black)  
(Michael Watson)

Date: 21/01/26