

Fire Risk Assessment for St John's Methodist Church complex, Argyle Road, Whitstable, CT5 1JS

Area: The Church, including the New Room, Flower Room, Boiler Room, Organ Loft, Chapel (Argyle Room), Old Entrance area and Office.

Use: Church services, social functions, rehearsals and concerts, meetings and activities.

1. Identify Fire Hazards

1.1. Sources of Ignition

- 1.1.1. Electrical sockets and lighting
- 1.1.2. Portable electric heaters
- 1.1.3. Church and user group equipment (computers, audio-visual systems, music players, organ, keyboards, etc)
- 1.1.4. Central heating boilers

1.2. Sources of Fuel

- 1.2.1. Paper materials
- 1.2.2. Various items stored in the old entrance area (jumble, books, etc)
- 1.2.3. Soft furnishings (seating; curtains)

1.3. Sources of Oxygen

- 1.3.1. Doors
- 1.3.2. Windows

2. People at Risk

- 2.1. Church members including children and the elderly
- 2.2. A small number of members who are vulnerable or who have mobility difficulties
- 2.3. Other adults and children where the church and/or adjoining rooms have been hired for events
- 2.4. Club members and those attending events, both adult and young children

3. Evaluate, Remove, Reduce and Protect from Risk

3.1. Evaluate the risk of the fire occurring

- 3.1.1. The building is within a no-smoking complex
- 3.1.2. No naked flames are permitted, except for occasional use of candles for church activities; this would be under adult control
- 3.1.3. No other sources of ignition are permitted within the areas
- 3.1.4. The New Room has a very small kitchenette, used solely for refreshments
- 3.1.5. Electrical checks are carried out iaw Methodist Insurance guidelines
- 3.1.6. The risk of a fire occurring is assessed as very low

3.2. Evaluate the risk to people from a fire starting in the premises

- 3.2.1. Lighting is good throughout and egress is mainly via wide corridors, either through a rear fire exit, a side door by the office or through the main church door giving access to the lobby and egress through the double front doors to the complex
- 3.2.2. No individual room, and collectively the whole area, is assessed as capable of holding sufficient people to cause problems with egress through the exits

- 3.2.3. Church events, where there might be a small number of members who have mobility difficulties, are controlled by stewards appointed by the minister. Stewards would ensure appropriate measures are taken to evacuate those who need assistance
 - 3.2.4. The risk to people from a fire starting in the premises is assessed as very low
- 3.3. Remove and reduce the hazards that may cause a fire
- 3.3.1. No potential sources of ignition have been identified
- 3.4. Remove and reduce the risks to people from a fire
- 3.4.1. The Church building is a Grade II listed building built predominantly of brick with a slate roof. Windows are double glazed within steel frames. The New Room is fitted with curtains and the church itself has curtains in the Sanctuary area and roller blinds for the windows; no other rooms have curtains or blinds.
 - 3.4.2. The church was a stand-alone building which was adjoined to the Wesley Hall by a new-build lobby, kitchen and office complex during refurbishment in 2007. As a result of the new build, the original church walls were breached to provide a main entrance door from the lobby area. The door is fire-rated with a viewing panel.
 - 3.4.3. The Chapel (Argyle Room) is a meeting room constructed within the original church building, as is the Old Entrance and the Office. All are served by a corridor leading to a side door giving access to the outside. An alternative method of exit could be via the Old Entrance doors or through the church.
 - 3.4.4. The Flower Room, New Room and Organ Loft are accessed through a rear fire-rated door from the church, and are housed within an extension thought to have been built around 1985. The Organ Loft is accessed via a narrow staircase which is well lit, and there are rarely more than two people in the loft at any one time. Egress from the New Room and Organ Loft staircase is through the Flower Room to a fire exit. At the rear of the Flower Room is a door to the central heating boiler cupboard.
 - 3.4.5. The building has a fire alarm system, fire extinguishers and emergency lighting. These are regularly maintained and checked by a commercial fire and safety company (Crimefighter Alarms Ltd)
 - 3.4.6. The church itself is used for a variety of activities in addition to worship, including concerts and club meetings. It is occasionally filled to capacity. There are two formal fire exit routes from the church, plus a further three exits. All lead through other areas such as the main lobby, the Chapel (Argyle Room), Old Entrance and Office areas, and through the Flower Room to the rear fire exit.
 - 3.4.7. The HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment Guide (ISBN: 978 1 85112 820 4) indicates at page 66 that for a low risk building with doors in excess of 1.050m width, up to 240 people could be safely evacuated from the building.
 - 3.4.8. The maximum practical capacity of the church and its adjacent rooms is assessed to be 210 people, based on practical experience of people seated at concert events. When the church is at full capacity, it is considered unlikely that there will be significant numbers of people in the associated rooms but, in any event, people in these rooms are unlikely to affect evacuation of the entire building and thus any risk to people from a fire is assessed as extremely low.