

From the Claims Desk: A Safe Workplace for Volunteers and Employees

It takes a lot to maintain a church. Between all the physical labor and administration performed by both volunteers and employees, there are a number of concerns that should be addressed to ensure worker safety.

That's why Sam Carucci, Vice President, Claims, for the Church Insurance Companies, stresses the importance of having a safety protocol in place. "If someone gets hurt, know who to call. Have someone trained in CPR available while the church is open. Know what to do for back and neck injuries."

The **Red Cross** can help you build your emergency procedures by providing CPR, First Aid, and other safety training classes that often can be hosted on-site.

If your church hosts or sponsors activities that go beyond the scope of religious interests – schools, thrift stores, AA meetings, or administrative work — make sure that you are in compliance with **OSHA** (Occupational Safety and Health Act) standards.

Follow Basic Safety Practices

"Keeping the workforce safe is a lot like keeping the community-at-large safe," Sam says. Take proper care of facilities and exercise common sense.

Here are basic safety guidelines for workers to follow:

- **Ladder safety**

Cordon off an area three times larger than the space used for the project. "That way" Sam says, "If something falls, no one will get hit. No one will walk into the ladder. No kids will climb up the ladder."

- **Lookouts and supervision**

Anytime someone performs physical work, post a lookout to make sure that people don't stumble into the area and harm themselves, or others. And have a supervisor present when any kind of work is happening. Sam says that, "This person should be properly trained for whatever task is underway, so they can help volunteers and employees take appropriate safety measures."

- **Volunteer selection**

"People of a certain age may not be the best choice to perform some physical activities because they could get hurt, or they may have a hidden health issue," but as Sam also points out, "There's always something everyone can do." So have elderly volunteers work on projects that won't put their health at risk, and save your younger volunteers for projects that are more physically demanding.

- **Fatigue**

Because fatigue can increase the chance of injury and accidents, look for warning signs in workers, such as irritability or giddiness. Insist on breaks every few hours, and consider providing refreshments. "Keep everyone hydrated," Sam suggests.

- **Security**

Don't wait until everyone leaves to lock up. You can help stop intruders and the chance of theft by locking doors even when a few people are still on the premises.

Preparation Prevents Problems

To prevent injuries, accidents, and even law suits, Sam believes that, "It's better to be prepared for what may happen than to deal with the consequences of not being prepared." So before your church takes on a big project, discuss it with your insurance representative. You may benefit from supplementary coverage, or at the very least, get helpful advice.

It's important to remember to "Keep your work environment safe, not just while the work is occurring," Sam says. "Make sure the area is safe from tampering and theft." Consider increasing lighting or putting up locked gates or temporary fencing around construction areas.

The people who work or volunteer for churches do so much. Their generosity of time and effort are what help make a church a vibrant part of the community. So take the basic steps to make sure that they, and your church, are safe.