

**DIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND MID-AMERICA**  
**RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA**

**DIOCESAN HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

Properties owned by the parish are open to visitors and workers as well as members of the parish. Therefore, the parish must take reasonable precautions to minimize, as much as reasonably possible, risks to the physical health and safety of those who use and are present in its facilities and on its property.

The purposes of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America Diocesan Health and Safety Policy are threefold:

- To minimize and prevent to the extent reasonably possible accidents on parish property.
- To promote good order and responsible health and safety practices in every parish and mission.
- To promote health and safety training for responsible members of the parish and mission, and to facilitate maintenance of the best practices related to health and safety.

This Diocesan Health and Safety Policy addresses those issues that pertain to church buildings and grounds, and on-premises activities. Hopefully, many of the items addressed by this policy are already being met in your parish. Some, however, may require a change in local practice.

It is the responsibility of the Parish Rector through the Parish Council to clearly communicate health and safety procedures and practices to the parish and implement this policy to the best extent possible. Each parish should conduct an annual safety review to assess risks. Each parish should provide periodic training to staff and volunteers on the policy. Officers of the parish/mission should support the Diocesan Health and Safety Policy in order to provide a good example for the entire congregation.

# **REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL DIOCESAN PARISHES & MISSIONS**

## **I. POLICY COORDINATOR / INSURANCE AUDIT**

Parishes should appoint an individual to serve as Health and Safety Coordinator. The Coordinator is responsible for conducting the annual safety review. This person also conducts an annual insurance audit to assure that the parish's insurance needs are met and that coverage is adequate. The Coordinator is appointed by the Parish Council annually and may be any parishioner in good standing. This individual should be knowledgeable in health, safety, and risk issues, and/or insurance matters.

## **II. FIRST AID / FIRST AID PROVIDERS**

- A.** Every parish/ mission must have a first aid kit.
- B.** The first aid kit needs to be in an accessible location and clearly marked. Emergency phone numbers should be clearly posted in a prominent location.
- C.** There should be no dispensing of any medications by the parish.
- D.** Every parish/ mission should have persons with first aid and CPR training with the goal that trained persons can be available at most services and activities. If such persons are not available, parishioners can be selected to attend local Red Cross training programs that are conducted in most communities.

## **III. CHURCH ALTAR AND NAVE**

- A.** All altar servers need to be properly trained and supervised in the handling of church items, especially those that involve fire; candles and incense. Altar servers should be mature enough to handle the responsibilities required for serving in the altar.
- B.** Young and less experienced servers should be supervised by older servers.
- C.** Parishes and missions should appoint an adult responsible for candle stands, ventilation, heating and cooling, and general needs of parishioners at each service.
- D.** Church fixtures and items of veneration (e.g. icons, kivot, analoi, candle stands, lampadas, reliquaries) should be properly attached, secured or on a stable base.
- E.** All combustibles (e.g. cloth, draperies, shades, decorations, plants) must be kept well away from hot items and open flames.
- F.** Carpeting should be in good repair with non slip backing or firmly attached to the floor.
- G.** Exits must be available, accessible, marked, and unobstructed at all times with doors hinged outward when possible.
- H.** Young children should be supervised by adults and not allowed to place candles without proper supervision.
- I.** Young children should not be allowed to extinguish or remove candles or tend to the candle stands.
- J.** Accessible fire extinguishers should be provided in both the altar and the nave.
- K.** All electrical cords and extensions should be properly placed. If strung across the floor they should be properly encased to prevent damage and properly secured to the floor.
- L.** An evacuation plan should be developed, and a fire drill performed annually.

#### **IV. CHURCH HALL AND KITCHEN**

- A.** All tables and chairs should be in good repair. All tables should have surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- B.** There should be easy and unobstructed access to exits with properly installed and adequate lighting.
- C.** No one should be in the kitchen at any time except those preparing, delivering or serving food and those involved in cleanup.
- D.** Young children should not be allowed to prepare or serve food.
- E.** For parishes with inadequate facilities, food should be brought to church as fully prepared as possible.
- F.** The kitchen should be clean at all times with utensils and equipment properly stored. This is especially important for knives, sharp utensils, electric appliances and glassware. Oven and dishwasher doors need to be kept closed.
- G.** Food preparation surfaces and equipment need to be properly disinfected prior to and after each use. Eating utensils should be properly disinfected and cleaned after each use. Wash rags should be used instead of sponges.
- H.** Hot items such as coffee pots must be kept on stable surfaces and out of the reach of children.
- I.** Cleaning supplies and all hazardous substances should be clearly marked, and kept in a secure place out of the reach of children.
- J.** Wet floors should be properly marked with signs/cones and mopped as soon as practicable.
- K.** Electric outlets should be properly grounded.
- L.** A fire extinguisher should be visible and easily accessible at all times.
- M.** All kitchen helpers, food preparers and food handlers should observe generally accepted sanitary practices such as washing of hands prior to handling food.

#### **VI. CHURCH GROUNDS**

- A.** Parking lots and walkways should be well lighted and in good repair. Regular inspections should be made, and replacement of bulbs and any repairs carried out as soon as practicable.
- B.** Walkways should be cleared to the extent possible in the event of ice or snow accumulation.
- C.** Parking spaces should be properly marked with designated spaces for handicapped persons.
- D.** The parking lot is not to be used as a play area unless a section is suitably cordoned off or barricaded from vehicular traffic.
- E.** Trees and brush should be trimmed back away from buildings. Dead trees should be removed regardless of size.
- F.** Handrails should be provided for steps and walkways with a sufficient slope to allow handicapped and wheelchair access.
- G.** Playground equipment should be well anchored and in good repair. Regular inspections should be made, and playground equipment with defects should be taken out of service until repairs can be made.
- H.** A sufficient number of garbage cans with fitted lids should be provided.

- I. Pets and other domestic animals may not be brought onto church property at any time. A certified guide dog may accompany a parishioner or visitor.

## **VII. STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE AREAS**

- A. Work areas need to be well lighted and ventilated. Regular inspections should be made, and bulbs replaced when necessary.
- B. Combustible items such as gasoline should be stored away from main buildings. All obsolete paints and chemicals should be properly discarded.
- C. All tools and safety equipment should be kept in good repair; this is especially true for ladders and fire extinguishers. Regular inspections should be made, and equipment replaced as necessary.

## **VIII. INFRASTRUCTURE**

- A. Furnaces and heating equipment need to be professionally inspected and serviced annually and filters need to be changed as recommended.
- B. Furnace and utility rooms should be free from all excess items. They are not store rooms.
- C. A sufficient number of smoke detectors must be placed as needed and inspected every six months for proper operation.
- D. Electrical wiring, circuitry, and outlets need to be inspected and upgraded as needed.
- E. Extension cords should be in good condition, be commercial grade, and used only on an occasional and temporary basis.
- F. Plumbing and gas lines should be periodically checked for cracks and leaks.
- G. All utility fixtures should be properly attached and secured.
- H. All staircases should have non skid surfaces on risers and must be in good repair with proper handrails.
- I. Stairways and hallways should be well lighted and free from obstructions at all times. Regular inspections should be made, and bulbs replaced and obstructions removed as necessary.
- J. Chimneys need to be inspected and cleaned at least annually and buildings need to be inspected periodically to prevent animal and bird entry and nesting.

## **IX. ACTIVITIES**

- A. All church sponsored activities especially those involving children require proper planning and supervision.
- B. Child activities should be age appropriate and should avoid inappropriate use of equipment, tools and materials.
- C. Sufficient assistance for the mobility of older adults should be provided.
- D. Sunscreen, water, and warming/cooling areas should be provided for outdoor activities as conditions warrant.
- E. For campfires/bonfires, a 10ft. diameter area around the fire should be clear from overhanging trees, brush, grass, and leaves. Fires should be at least 25ft. from the nearest building or storage area. A fire is never left unattended. Water needs to be nearby for an emergency and to put out a fire. Fires should be avoided when drought and fire hazard conditions are present.