



# The Church Safety Committee

The church safety committee includes representation from various church functions and is guided by the church safety officer. The committee allows for an integrated approach to safety and enhances the effectiveness of safety measures across ministries. The committee's focus is on the development of safety programs and emergency plans, identification of exposures through self-inspections and activity reviews, and the investigation of accidents to determine the best measures for correcting conditions that caused them.

## The Safety Committee

The safety committee members should be appointed through the regular nominating committee process. The committee is generally composed of the church safety officer, representation from key ministries such as a deacon, children's ministries, and physical plant services, and (where possible) a medical professional or any first responders such as an emergency medical technician, police, or firefighting professional. When selecting committee members, keep in mind that some tasks such as accident investigation, which may involve confidential information, require maturity and discretion.

The committee should meet on a regular basis. Record minutes on a quarterly basis at minimum. For smaller churches, the safety issues could be addressed as a permanent part of the monthly staff/board meetings.

## Committee Activities

**Self-inspections** help identify physical hazards inside and outside the church. The committee may assist the church safety officer in performing self-inspections of the premises. Use ARM's Church Self-Inspection form available on [AdventistRisk.org](http://AdventistRisk.org) as a guiding resource.

**Security** is an area of increasing concern for churches. Learning how to implement a compassion-based plan that is both Christ-centered and effective is possible. Various functions such as lighting, keys, and cameras should be reviewed. The team should also consider processes and education so the church can respond effectively when facing suspicious activity. Thinking about the church as a body with layers of defense will help to make the church more effective not only in the area of security, but also in hospitality.



**Emergency plans** are another important aspect of church safety. The committee, with the church safety officer, should review the church emergency plan. Drills should be practiced with deacons and other key personnel, so they become familiar with their responsibilities during each type of disaster. ARM recommends running a church emergency drill twice a year at minimum.

**Activities and transportation** should also be discussed in committee meetings. Following approval by the church board, the committee could be asked to review activities and transportation logistics to help determine safety elements needed. See ARM's Field Trip Activity Planner on AdventistRisk.org and check that parental/guardian permission slips and signed medical release forms needed for minors are in place and meet conference standards.

**Child protection planning** does not take place simply in Children's Ministries or the Pathfinder club. Our children are an integral part of all church activities and a wholistic approach to protecting them is needed to be effective. Work with the screening coordinator, children's department leaders, facilities leaders, pastors and elders to ensure the whole church is working together to protect our children.

**Maintenance** is another area of interest for the safety committee. While maintenance may not be the committee's primary responsibility, many financial losses are tied directly to lack of maintenance. A leak creating a wet floor, torn or wrinkled carpet, uneven sidewalks and holes in the parking lot are all examples of conditions that frequently cause trips and falls. The committee may seek to

review the maintenance records on a quarterly basis and compare against the inspection reports to identify areas that need correction.

## Accident Investigation

A primary method of controlling losses is through a formal investigation and review of all accidents at the church—both actual accidents and near miss incidents. When an accident is reported, a designated individual (often the safety officer) formally appointed in writing by the committee will determine the underlying causes of the accident by:

- 1 Visiting the scene
- 2 Interviewing witnesses, recording their observations and contact information
- 3 Checking for causes resulting from:
  - a. anyone's actions
  - b. dangerous work practices
  - c. disobeyed rules
  - d. poor housekeeping
  - e. property defects
  - f. improper or inadequate use of safety apparel
  - g. defective equipment
- 4 Recording information of any other poor conditions

Based on the final report, the committee will make written recommendations to the church pastor or board. The recommendations will include their conclusion as to the cause of the accident and corrective measures to prevent it from happening again in the future. The pastor may choose to present significant findings to the church board for information and possible policy adjustments.

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