



Risk Assessment for Monthly Indoor Meetings at Church House

Summary

Hitchin Historical Society is a group of local people with an interest in the history and present and future state of the town of Hitchin in Hertfordshire. It has a membership of about 340. Meetings are held monthly in a hired hall when speakers are invited talk about subjects relevant to the interests of members. Usual attendance is about 70.

Purpose

This document is intended to assess the risks involved in holding the monthly meetings and to suggest any mitigations that might be required to make the risk "As low as reasonably practical" (ALARP).

Exclusions

This assessment will not take account of any hazards which are the responsibility of the owners of the hired premises and therefore not under the control of the Society. Such hazards may be:

- Adequacy of fire safety equipment
- Adequacy of route and means of escape
- Provision for visitors with disabilities
- Safety of the folding chairs and tables
- Provision of emergency lighting
- Adequacy of ventilation
- Safety of Electrical installation
- Safety of Heating installation

Methodology

The method uses a 5x5 table of probability and severity and is widely used within the safety industry. The risk is calculated by multiplying the value of probability by the value of severity. The meaning of the numbers is explained in a Methodology Document, available on request.

Risk values less than 10 are rated as tolerable, though they may be capable of reduction with mitigation. Risks equal to or greater than 10 are rated intolerable and mitigations must be employed.

Scenario

The scenario of a monthly meeting consists of the following stages:

1. **Setting up:** Volunteers open the building and set out the chairs and tables required along with a projector on a stand, laptop and mains extension cable. Refreshments may be laid out. Books for sale or loan may be taken out and put on display. A ramp for disabled access is laid at the front door.
2. **Audience arrive:** Society members arrive to form the audience. Both members and visitors are requested to sign the attendance Book. The audience then take a seat.
3. **Welcome and talk:** A Committee Member welcomes everybody and introduces the speaker. A guest speaker addresses the audience.
4. **Afterwards:** After the talk the audience may be served with refreshments and there may be literature for sale or loan.
5. **Departure and Clear up:** The members depart and volunteers clear the furniture, refreshments and books, put the ramp away and lock up.

Hazard analysis

The hazards associated with each of the stages listed in the Scenario section, will be identified and assessed. Numerical values will be transferred to the Risk Matrix.

1. Setting up

Moving around means there may be slip or trip hazard. The probability is medium 4, but the consequence is low, 1.

Lifting chairs or books may lead to back strain due to poor technique. The probability is medium, 4, and the consequence is medium, 2 tempered by adequate training in lifting technique, reducing probability to 2.

The action of folding chairs and tables may trap fingers of the careless. The probability is medium 4, but the consequence is low, 1.

The electrical equipment is designed to be safe for general use by the public. All equipment will be well maintained and setup will be carried out by experienced persons and therefore does not present a hazard.

The sound equipment is housed in a cupboard on the stage, but access by volunteers is only subject to slip/ trip hazards above. Cables are covered in an anti-trip housing and do not cause a hazard.

Preparation of hot drinks involves the use of kettles or an urn which may lead to a scalding hazard. The probability is medium, 4, and the consequence is medium, 2, tempered by adequate care taken by volunteers, reducing probability to 2. Use of water in kitchen: spills may lead to slip hazard as above.

Moving crockery in and out of storage may involve a lifting hazard, as covered above.

The layout of the seating affects the safety of the audience if an evacuation becomes necessary. The probability is remote, say 3, but the consequences could be high, say 4. This will be mitigated by appropriate spacing of the seats and rows, keeping gangways and fire exits clear, This reduces the probability to 2.

2. Arriving

There may be a slip or trip hazard as above. Note that the majority of attendees are regulars and are therefore familiar with the building layout, access and exit points. This helps to reduce the probability of accidents.

Following the Government relaxation of restrictions in Spring 2022, no precautions are considered for Covid protection. However, the Society keeps a record of attendance at meetings to help account for everyone if an evacuation is necessary. This satisfied the previous requirement for record keeping.

3. Welcome & talk

No hazard has been identified with sitting listening to a talk, but see earlier note about seating layout.

It is common practice for the person welcoming to inform the audience of the location of emergency exits.

4. Afterwards

Slip & trip may still be a hazard

Serving hot drinks may lead to a scalding hazard. The probability is medium, 4, and the consequence is medium, 2, mitigated by adequate care taken by serving volunteers, reducing probability to 2.

Dispersal of audience is expected to be orderly and smooth. No hazard is associated.

5. Departure & Clear up

The same hazards apply as for 1. above.

Washing up doesn't appear to have any associated hazard.



Hitchin Historical Society

Risk Matrix

Activity	Monthly Indoor Meetings at Church House	Applies to	Society members, committee, volunteers, visitors					
Assessor:	SM Hallas, 10 August 2022							
HAZARD	TYPE/ CONSEQUENCE	RISK (Before Controls)			CONTROL MEASURES IN PLACE/ PROPOSED	RISK (After Controls)		
		L	C	R		L	C	R
1. Setting up, Members enter, clearing up, moving about	Slip, trip fall – minor injury	4	1	4	None needed	4	1	4
2. Emergency evacuation	Injury or death	3	4	12	Correct layout of seating	2	4	8
3. Lifting chairs, books etc	Back injury	4	2	8	Training in correct technique	2	2	4
4. Set up chairs/ tables	Finger trapped	4	1	4	None needed	4	1	4
5. Hot drinks preparation & serving	Scalding	4	2	8	Take care in handling hot drinks	2	2	4
Additional Control Measures					Justification for Acceptance			
None					All risks rated tolerable. Therefore judged to be ALARP			

Key: L= Likelihood/ Probability (1 very unlikely, 5 highly likely), C = Consequence (1 trivial, 5 Multiple deaths), R = Risk = product of LxC (<10 is tolerable)

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