

Houses of Worship Safety Checklist



Although houses of worship are meant to be places of refuge, they are prone to the same risks as any other building – if not more due to the significant foot traffic on the premises. Because the safety of your congregation is paramount, it is crucial to ensure your building and its surrounding grounds are in the best possible condition and free from hazardous exposures. Utilize the below checklist to identify areas most in need of attention at your house of worship.

Water Damage

- _____ On a weekly basis, look at interior ceilings and walls for any signs of possible water damage. The sooner an issue is identified and addressed, the less damage and deterioration will occur.
- _____ On a weekly basis, walk the exterior of the premises to see if there are any noticeable shingle issues or other roof concerns that can be seen from the ground. If something looks amiss, contact a licensed and insured roofer to inspect the roof and make necessary repairs. A roof leak can cause major issues (and high financial consequences) if left unchecked.
- _____ Clean gutters and downspouts regularly to prevent clogging.
- _____ Remove valuables from the basement, or store items on high shelves away from water-pooling areas.
- _____ During the winter, keep the thermostat no lower than 55 degrees to avoid pipes freezing and bursting.
- _____ Install water leak detection devices within the building.
- _____ Have the kitchen, bathroom, hot water heater and laundry room pipes inspected yearly, as these are most prone to leakage.
- _____ Disconnect outdoor hoses when cold weather starts to prevent any standing water from freezing and pipes from bursting.
- _____ Know where your water main is located within the building. If the building will be unattended for an extended period of time, make sure to turn it off.
- _____ Monitor your water bill – any unexpected increases can be the result of water leakage.
- _____ Have a dehumidifier stored on-site to lessen the extent of water damage in the event of a leak.

Slips, Trips and Falls

- _____ Walk the exterior of the property on a weekly basis to check for potholes, cracks and any uneven surfaces in parking/sidewalk areas and steps/walkways. Any cracked or uneven areas should be repaired by a licensed and insured contractor as soon as possible.
- _____ Check walkways, stairs and means of egress on a daily basis to ensure they are clutter-free.

- _____ Remove snow and ice promptly after a storm to prevent a slip or fall.
- _____ Apply rock salt to sidewalks/driveways three hours prior to, during and after a snowstorm.

Fire Protection and Prevention

- _____ Circuit breakers have a limited lifespan; if the breaker at your premises is old or outdated, replacement is necessary to ensure efficient and safe electrical operation. Contact a licensed and insured electrician to replace it immediately.
- _____ Install and maintain fire, smoke and heat detection devices – preferably connected to a central alarm system.
- _____ Avoid using space heaters.
- _____ Avoid overloading extension cords, and do not use extension cords on a permanent basis.
- _____ Have fire extinguishers present in all common areas and serviced annually.
- _____ Safely dispose of any flammables.
- _____ Keep all trash containers at least 20 feet away (ideally as far away as possible) from the building.

Overgrown Trees

- _____ Trim or remove large branches hanging over or onto the building, cars, sidewalks and walkways.
- _____ Inspect your property for dead trees and branches that may fall in the event of a storm, and trim them beforehand.

Property Maintenance and Safety

- _____ Discard any trash or debris left on-site after people leave.
 - _____ Install security cameras on the exterior of the building to help deter unwanted activity.
 - _____ Report any unauthorized activity on the premises to the local police.
- Contact the police if vagrant activity is present – be aware of vagrancy laws in your state.

Did you know your USLI policy gives you access to free information and discounted services you can use at any time? Visit the Business Resource Center at www.bizresourcecenter.com to explore what's available.

If you operate a house of worship, understanding risk management is critical to maintaining your establishment. Visit www.bizresourcecenter.com/protect-your-house-of-worship to learn more.