



Closing for the Winter Lockdown

Wherever you are in Great Britain you are likely to be subject to varying degrees of restrictions or periods of 'lockdown' this winter.

Lockdowns at this time of year present perhaps greater risks than those experienced earlier in the year when the evenings were light, and the weather was warm. This short guidance note sets out some recommended steps you can take in order to safeguard your property, those who may still be using your sites, your employees and clergy during these periods.

Your Buildings:

The CIS scheme property insurers, CNM Ltd, reported that during the first lockdown the value of some claims increased as a result of delays in discovering and addressing damage. In order to protect any buildings not in use during lockdown periods we recommend you:

- Remove all combustible waste and ensure that waste is not stored near buildings;
- Maintain weekly visits to visually inspect all properties, internally and externally;
- To protect against Legionella, you should run all unused/little-used outlets (including external taps) on a weekly basis;
- Ensure that you are aware of the location of stopcocks and that they can be easily operated;
- Set heating thermostats to 10°C to maintain ambient temperature and prevent water pipes freezing;
- Provide contact details to neighbours of unoccupied sites and ask that they report any concerns to you.

As the number of people visiting for private prayer may decrease during this period, we would remind you of the guidance issued by CNM previously in respect of unattended candles:

- Before a property is secured and at the end of each day, ensure all candles are extinguished (other than Sanctuary Lights kept in glass containers);
- Only place candles on non-combustible surfaces, where combustible materials are not nearby;
- Votive candle stands should be used for holding multiple candles. Each candle should be adequately spaced (approx. 10cm) apart and consideration should be given to the height of candles used as they can easily collapse and ignite each other;
 - Always keep candles away from drafts;
 - Ensure that tea lights are placed in fire resistant holders;
 - Check the candle holders are sufficient in size to accommodate any molten wax;
 - Suitable fire extinguishers must be available in areas where candles are used;
 - Your risk assessment should consider the risk of candles.

Your Employees:

It is likely that during the first lockdown you put in place all the necessary risk assessments for your employees, who may now be working from home once again. It may be, however, that different individuals are now working from home, either new employees or those previously furloughed, and that some individuals may be lone working where working from home isn't possible.

You should ensure that all relevant risk assessments are undertaken for these employees and that they are shared with your employees as necessary. Further guidance about health and safety can be found in the Members' Area of our website, or on the Ellis Whittam Coronavirus Advice Hub.

It is also important to support individuals' mental health during these difficult times. All clergy and employees of insured organisations can access a 24/7 telephone counselling line which is provided as part of your insurances. Please contact us if you require the details.

The Public:

Users of your site(s) may be fewer during lockdown, but steps should still be taken to ensure that they are as safe as possible:

- Inspect your sites to ensure that there are no hazards or repairs which need to be undertaken, tradespeople are still able to work. Record the inspection, perhaps in the minutes of a relevant meeting (e.g. H&S, Finance), and details of any works undertaken.
- Where repairs cannot be undertaken straight away, ensure the area is cordoned off and signs are erected as necessary.
- Ensure that external lights are working and are operating on timers or will be switched on as required.
- Ensure that transient hazards continue to be dealt with, for example, leaves are still being cleared from paths and, if temperatures fall, that paths are gritted to prevent frost as necessary.