

## **SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR PARISH HALL RENTAL/USAGE**

### **Introduction**

The following safety and insurance guidelines are designed to assist parishes with the rental/usage of their parish hall. The guidelines focus on safety recommendations to reduce or prevent the most common claims associated with parish hall rentals.

### **Parish Hall Coordinator**

Each parish should appoint an individual to regulate the usage of the parish hall. The parish hall coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the safety requirements outlined in these guidelines are met. The parish hall coordinator also allows for easy identification of the individual responsible for decisions associated with usage of the hall.

### **Parish Sponsored Versus Non-Parish Sponsored Hall Usage**

The parish hall coordinator should determine whether or not an activity in the parish hall is parish or non-parish sponsored. The criteria on the Facility Usage/Indemnity Agreement will assist in identifying whether the activity or group is parish sponsored.

If an activity is parish sponsored, it will usually be covered under the Arch/Diocese's insurance program. The hall safety guidelines should still be followed for a parish-sponsored activity.

If it is determined that the hall usage is non-parish sponsored, there are two options:

1. The organization or individual using parish facilities can complete the Facility Usage/Indemnity Agreement. This agreement requires \$1,000,000 in liability coverage. The liability coverage must name your parish and the Arch/Diocese as an additional insured.
2. If available within your Arch/Diocese, Special Events Coverage can be utilized to cover the individual or organization holding the activity, as well as the parish and the Arch/Diocese.

Please contact Catholic Mutual if you desire any assistance differentiating between a parish and non-parish sponsored activity.

## **Parish Premises Safety**

Most claims associated with parish premises result from slips, trips, and falls. The majority of these accidents can be prevented with a good parish inspection and maintenance program.

### **Exterior Hazards**

- Weather Related Perils - Snow and ice frequently cause slip and fall accidents. Fortunately, proper snow removal procedures along with salting can effectively treat this hazard. Activities in parish halls usually involve numerous people. Therefore, it is critical that the parish hall coordinator ensure that staff is available for snow and ice removal before, during and after an activity. Additionally, snow removal equipment and salt should be made available to the hall user.
- Cracked and uneven pavement/sidewalks is a common exterior trip hazard. Uneven surfaces should be identified and repaired (if possible, prior to a parish hall activity). If a permanent repair is not possible, uneven areas should be highlighted with yellow, orange, or white paint.
- Inadequate lighting often leads to an accident. Accordingly, parking lots and sidewalks should be well lit.

### **Interior Hazards**

- Indoors, people most commonly slip on debris or condensation. During large events in parish halls, it is common for debris to accumulate on floors or condensation to be tracked in from the outdoors. In either case, it is critical that parish maintenance be present to monitor tracking services and clean as necessary. For a non-parish sponsored use of the hall, another option is to furnish cleaning supplies to the individual or group using the hall.
- Adequate lighting is also critical to prevent outdoor accidents. It is particularly important to ensure that entryways and stairwells are well lit.

### **Emergency Lighting**

Due to the potential size of activities held in parish halls, halls should be outfitted with emergency lighting. The number of emergency lights required varies dependent upon the size of the hall. Generally, when installing emergency lighting, it should be ensured that exits are clearly illuminated during a power outage.

### **Bloodborne Pathogen Cleanup and First Aid Kits**

The clean-up of bodily fluids presents a unique liability exposure. Parish halls that are utilized on a regular basis should have a bloodborne pathogen cleanup kit present in the parish hall. Likewise, a first aid kit should be made available during hall activities. For non-parish sponsored hall activities, the location of the bloodborne pathogen cleanup kit and first aid kit should be made known to the hall user.

### **Fire Extinguishers**

An adequate number of five-pound ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers should be located in the parish hall.

### Security/Key Control

The parish hall coordinator should assess each hall activity to determine whether or not security is needed. If it is, the parish should arrange for appropriate security personnel to be present at the activity. For non-parish sponsored activities that require security, the parish hall coordinator should make it a requirement of the hall rental agreement that the hall user hire security.

Key control is a critical element of parish hall usage. Often times, keys are distributed to an inappropriate number of people. The spreading of keys, even to reliable parishioners, severely weaken a parish's security. It is recommended that keys not be given out to individuals using the hall. The preferred method is for the hall coordinator or appointed representative to open up the parish hall prior to an activity and lock up when the activity is complete.

### Alcohol

Beer, wine, or liquor is sold or distributed at many parish hall events. Parishes should be aware that they are potentially liable for claims that arise out of the consumption of alcohol. Parishes need to be concerned with consumption by minors and with ensuring that people who are intoxicated are no longer allowed to drink alcoholic beverages. Recommendations that can assist in reducing a parish's liability in the event of an alcohol-related incident are as follows.

- Licensed bartenders should be present at all times (or an individual who has had adequate training in dispensing alcohol). All bartenders must be at least 21 years of age and should not be allowed to consume alcohol while behind the bar.
- Alcohol should never be served to an individual under the legal drinking age. Identification should be checked for anyone who appears to be under the age of 30.
- An individual should only be allowed to order or obtain one drink at a time. This will assist in deterring someone from becoming too rapidly intoxicated and will deter someone from providing a drink to a minor.
- A pre-existing plan should exist to handle individuals who have had too much to drink. The plan should include the necessary security to assist the bartender who is refusing service to an intoxicated individual, along with providing alternate methods of transportation to individuals who feel they are too intoxicated to drive their vehicles. Identification should be checked to insure that individuals under the age of 21 are not served alcohol. A good rule of thumb is to check the identification of any individual that appears to be under the age of 30.
- Alcohol should not be given away as a prize.
- A good procedure is to stop dispensing alcohol one hour before the event closes. Coffee and/or soft drinks should be served at this time.

For additional information and/or assistance on controlling the liquor liability exposure, please contact Catholic Mutual.

### Food Preparation and Service

Many parishes sponsor events in their hall where food is prepared. Serious injury or illness can arise from the consumption of contaminated food. A few simple steps can help control this exposure.

- For food preparation by the parish, a list of all suppliers along with purchase invoices should be kept. Food must be stored under the proper temperature once it is delivered to the parish. Prior to the food being used, it should be inspected for any signs of contamination or spoilage.
- Once food is opened for use or preparation, proper handling and storage precautions must still be followed. Frozen foods should never be thawed on a counter top, but instead thawed in the refrigerator or in a bag under cold running water.
- Parish employees or volunteers often prepare food. Workers should be reminded to wash their hands with soap and warm water before handling food. Also, gloves and hair restraints should be worn. All kitchen surfaces and utensils should be kept clean and sanitary.
- Prior to distribution, it must always be verified that food has been cooked thoroughly in order to destroy bacteria. It is recommended that thermometers be utilized to determine if the internal temperature of the food has reached a safe temperature. Internal temperatures should reach 160 degrees. For poultry, temperatures need to reach 185 degrees. During the service of food, food that will not immediately be dispensed should be kept at above 140 degrees for warm food and below 40 degrees for foods served cold.

The above food preparation and service guidelines should also be adhered to for non-parish sponsored activities with the parish hall coordinator ensuring that this is done.