



Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn

# A Guide for the Safe Use of Candles

Many churches, schools and other ministries use candles. A candle is an open flame capable of igniting anything that can burn. The effects of fire can be devastating. Physical injury, damage to property and the loss of assets are obvious consequences, however the interruption to business and mission, the loss of sensitive information and the emotional impact on workers and the community are also significant.

The purpose of this guide is to assist in minimising the risk of harm when it comes to using candles. It should not be seen as a recommendation to cease using candles. It is, however, important to remember that candles can be a cause of major fires and serious injuries if not used correctly. It is advised to revisit your risk assessment and review procedures regularly.

## Using candles safely

Simple precautions should mean that candles are used safely.

Your risk assessment needs to take into account the risk that candles pose – particularly to people, and especially to children – as well as the precautions you need to put in place. It is strongly suggested that you record your assessment in writing.

Consider the following when attending a risk assessment or developing procedures:

- The choice of candle - good quality slow-burning candles are best. Cheaper, catering-quality candles will burn down quickly, and the flame may soon get dangerously close to a flammable material;
- Keep candles well away from items that can catch fire. This includes clothing, books, paper, curtains, Christmas trees, flammable decorations or liquids;
- Plan carefully the position of candles. Avoid using them in congested or in high traffic areas, especially around children who may knock them over;
- Consider limiting or managing the number of people in areas where there are candles;
- Make sure candles are placed on stable, heat resistant surfaces;
- Keep candles away from drafts, vents and ceiling fans to prevent rapid uneven burning, to avoid flame flare ups and to reduce the risk of items blowing into the flame and igniting;
- Place burning candles a safe distance apart so they are less likely to create drafts, which can cause candles to flare;
- Use sturdy candleholders made of non-combustible materials;
- Never leave a burning candle unattended – candles should be completely extinguished before you leave a room;
- Extinguish candles with a candle snuffer and ensure that the wick is no longer glowing before leaving the candle;
- Ensure an appropriate fire extinguisher is available and accessible at all times;
- Wardens and other identified personnel must know where the extinguishers are and how to use them – training can be provided either by your fire extinguisher supplier or the local Fire Brigade;



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- A fire blanket may be a better way of dealing with some fire situations such as burning clothing - there should be at least one available;
- If a fire should start, you must be certain that people can get out of the building quickly – all doors must be unlocked prior to the service or activity and be capable of being opened quickly;
- A warden and/or other identified persons should be appointed and trained to support the need for emergency situations Eg -knowledge of building exits, emergency evacuation plans, assemble areas, first aid, the location of first aid kits and emergency contact numbers;
- All ministry leaders need to be aware of fire risks, and in the event of an emergency, be ready to ask everyone to leave in an orderly fashion following the sites emergency evacuation plan;
- For large services or activities, a trained first-aider with first aid equipment should be available;

## What do I need to do?

Reviewing your risk assessment procedures will assist in providing assurance that the ministry has in place practicable measures to reduce the risks associated with the use of candles. When attending your review:

- Consult with workers including volunteers;
- Identify the hazards associated with candles in your workplace:  
Ask the questions:
  - What might happen?
  - When might it happen?
  - Why might it happen?
  - What could cause this to happen (there may be multiple causes)?
- Consider what you are currently doing to manage the risk of candle fire and whether it is effective (also known as controls);
- Develop (document) and implement any new controls necessary;
- Consider how you will effectively communicate any new controls or processes to all who need to know