

Protecting Our Parishes and Schools

Keeping Our Volunteers Safe

The Church runs on Volunteer power. They play a critical role in planning, setting up and breaking down for Masses, Dinners, Craft Shows, and Fall Festivals to name a few. Volunteers play a key role in our Church.

It is important that we use our volunteers with purpose and safety in mind. In viewing our injury claim history, we have seen injuries occur to volunteers as a result of the volunteer doing work activities that they either were not qualified for, or where their physical conditions were not a good match for the task, causing a great probability of potential injury. Remember, volunteers have such a high regard for the Church that they will take on any task assigned just to be able to help out, so let us put them in a "win-win" situation by matching them with activities for which they are best qualified.

Volunteers, especially elderly or inexperienced younger ones, can be more at risk of an injury if they are not familiar or physically capable with the task to be performed. Their physical and mental condition may not be suited for a particular job; therefore matching skill levels and physical ability is paramount in preventing mishaps.

As a general rule, match the job to be done with the most capable and experienced person. As an example, we don't want to send an elderly person up an extension ladder to perform elevated work. While some in this group may have the ability to safely use a ladder, the tasks should be matched with the physical capabilities of our volunteers.

Guidelines for 5 Common Activities Volunteers Perform

Pressure Washing

- Always read and follow the operator's manual and all operating instructions before using the equipment.
- Make sure to check the engine oil level each time you use your pressure washer.
- When changing or adding oil, do not overfill the engine crankcase. Overfilling oil may cause smoking, hard starting, spark plug fouling, and oil saturation of the air filter.
- Do not run the pressure washer before connecting and turning on the water supply, as failing to do so will result in damage to the pump.

- Always keep the high-pressure hose connected to both the pump and the spray gun while the system is pressurized.
- Never refuel a hot or running engine. Wait five minutes before refueling.
- Do not secure the spray gun trigger in the spray position.
- Never adjust the spray pattern or change a spray tip while spraying.
- Using a pressure washer from a ladder, scaffolding, or other unstable position is not recommended. A slip or fall could result from the recoil of the initial spray, or the pressure of the water striking a wall surface.
- Never attempt to repair a damaged high-pressure hose. If the high-pressure hose is damaged, replace with a new one.
- Assume a solid stance and firmly grasp the spray gun with both hands before squeezing the spray gun trigger. This will help to avoid injury if the gun kicks back.
- High-pressure spray can cut through skin. Never spray people or animals, as injury can result.
- Use extreme caution when spraying near power lines, service feeds, and electrical meters.
- Keep the nozzle spray away from electrical wiring and windows.
- Never allow children to operate the pressure washer. Do not leave a pressure washer unattended while it is running.
- Do not wear open-toed shoes while pressure washing.
- Most importantly, always wear goggles when using a pressure washer or when in the vicinity of the equipment in use. The high-pressure spray can cause paint chips or other particles to become airborne.

- Spray gun traps high water pressure, even when engine/motor is stopped and water is disconnected. ALWAYS point spray gun in safe direction and squeeze spray gun trigger, to release high pressure, every time you stop engine/motor. Engage trigger lock when not in use.





Working from Ladders

- Use only Type I or II ladders. (Type III are not to be used).
- Only physically fit and mentally alert persons should use a ladder.
- Do not allow volunteers with diminished dexterity to use ladders.
- Inspect all ladders before use – check for integrity and stability.
- Use appropriate ladder for the task – do not use metal ladders for electrical work.
- Ensure ladders are placed on even surfaces.
- Use ladders with a buddy system, with one person on the ground.
- Keep your torso between the beams; do not over extend.
- Look for overhead wires before raising a ladder.
- Make sure the ladder is suited for the type of job you plan to do (see the types above).
- Before using a ladder, especially a ladder that has been stored in the garage for a while, inspect it for cracks or broken joints.
- Place your ladder on a stable, even, flat surface. Never place a ladder on top of another object.
- Use the 1:4 ratio to ensure a stable working platform. Place the base of the ladder 1 foot away of whatever it leans against for every 4 feet of height to the point where the ladder contacts at the top (see graphic).
- When using an A-frame stepladder, make sure the brace is locked in place.
- If climbing onto another surface, make sure the ladder extends at least three feet past the platform you're climbing onto.
- Secure tall ladders by lashing or fastening the ladder to prevent movement.
- Always face the ladder when climbing or descending.
- Keep both feet on the ladder – never put one foot on a rung and the other foot on a different surface.



Painting

- Do not perform work in a heavily populated area, including building air intake areas, until appropriate warnings are posted and occupants notified.
- Whenever possible, isolate the immediate area to prevent injury to bystanders.
- Protect your working area with warning flags and traffic cones when working road and traffic lines.

- Eye protection is required whenever rust or loose paint is removed from surfaces with a wire brush. A hard hat is required if the work area is exposed to falling objects.
- To avoid splinters, always observe the condition of the wood before sanding.
- Store and dispense flammable solvents from approved safety cans only.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for handling all epoxy materials, thinners, catalysts, paint removers, etc. Gloves and respirators are often required.
- Make a safety check of all equipment, such as staging tools, spray pots, hoses, and fitting hooks.
- Clean all working areas after each job.
- Make sure that you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling food.

Wood Working

- The most powerful tool in your shop is your brain, use it. Thinking your cuts and movements through before acting can help save both fingers and scrap wood.
- Wearing the proper personal protection equipment is an important part of safe tool operation. Goggles, Ear Protection, and Lung Protection should be used when operating tools. Use push sticks when working close to the blade and make sure the tool's safety features are in place.
- Loose clothing, jewelry, or even your hair can get caught in power tools and cause severe injury.
- A cluttered shop is an accident waiting to happen. Maintaining a clean shop will help protect you from tripping hazards as well as keep your tools in good—and safe—working condition.
- Pay attention to your actions. Looking up to watch the shop TV or visitors can result in your hand contacting the blade. Always wait until you have completed your cut before you take your eyes off the blade.
- Keep in mind that this is just a hobby, and take a break when you feel rushed or frustrated with a project. Mistakes happen when we rush to complete a job.





- If your saw is resisting the cut, stop and see what's wrong. A misaligned rip fence or improperly seated throat plate can sometimes cause a board to get stuck in mid-cut. Forcing the board in these situations may cause kickback or contact with the blade. Take a moment to evaluate the situation and determine the problem.
- Solvent fumes and airborne dust can present health and explosion hazards. Care should be taken to ensure a supply of fresh air and use explosion proof vent fans.

Christmas Lighting

- Choose Christmas lights that have been tested and deemed safe by a reputable testing laboratory. The best are UL or ETL. Christmas lights listed as safe by these laboratories will note that on the packaging.
- Try to use the cooler-burning "mini" Christmas lights as opposed to the traditional larger bulbs. The older style burns much hotter.
- Only use Christmas lights that have fuses in the plugs.
- Inspect each set of Christmas lights, old or new, for damage. Return or throw out any set with cracked or broken sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.
- Replace burned-out bulbs promptly with bulbs of the same wattage.
- Never hang Christmas lights on a metal tree. The tree can become charged with electricity and shock someone. The tree can also short-out the Christmas lights and cause a fire.
- Want Christmas lights outdoors? Use outdoor Christmas lights. The packaging will note whether the lights can be used indoors, outdoors, or both.
- All outdoor electrical decorations should be plugged into a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). You can buy portable units for outdoor use, or you can have them permanently installed by an electrician.
- Use extension cords properly. Outdoor cords can be used inside or outside. Do not overload extension cords—they can get hot enough to burn.
- Stay away from power lines or feeder lines (these go from the pole to the house).
- Secure outside Christmas lights with insulated holders (never use tacks or nails) or run strings of lights through hooks.
- When you leave or go to bed at night, turn off your Christmas lights.
- Never pull on a string of Christmas lights, as it stresses the cords and can lead to fraying. Store Christmas lights loosely wrapped for the same reason.

Your involvement in protecting our most valued resources, the church volunteer, is paramount in the overall Risk Management Program.

