



Ensuring the Lodge is Conscious of Potential Safety Hazards & Risks

The recently enacted changes to the *New Zealand Workplace Health & Safety Act 2015* have caused some concern amongst those directly affected by them – i.e. those organisations classified as “A Person or Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking” or (PCBU).

From reading the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment circular entitled “Volunteers and the Health and Safety at Work Act” it would appear that *most* Freemason’s lodges will fall under the classification of “Volunteer Associations” which are separate from the PCBU classification shown above and thus not directly affected by the Act.

However, where a lodge building is owned by a separate hall company, it is likely that the directors and officers of that company will NOT be covered under the “Volunteer Association” blanket so therefore will need to ensure that they have the appropriate policies and procedures in place to meet the requirements of a PCBU as laid out in the Act. As the Masonic facility is often a place of work for catering staff, cleaners, tradespeople etc., they will be caught by clauses 37, 38 and 43 of the Act, the latter clause if they commission a consultant / tradesperson to undertake alterations to the design of the building.

Whilst not being classed as a PCBU may be of some comfort to most lodges, there is obviously a need to exercise care in ensuring that our activities within the Lodge do not run the risk of causing injury, either physical or emotional. On the surface, it would appear that there is little risk of injury attributable to our ceremonies. However, if we look carefully at some sections of our activities, it becomes obvious that care is necessary.



THE FREEMASONS TOOLBOX



A couple of activities come to mind – the first is in the Alternative 3rd degree when the final challenge is given to Hiram Abiff and he rejects it; the next act should be exercised with some care. Those who have experienced this activity will know what is meant. There is a risk that, through lack of attention or even failure of the equipment, the candidate could suffer injury.

Another consideration is that, during a fair portion of the 1st degree, the candidate is blindfolded during the perambulations around the Lodge. Particular care should be taken by the JD to ensure that he keeps a firm hold on the candidate, carefully steering him through these perambulations and also quietly keeping him informed of what is coming up.

There will inevitably be other areas that may run the risk of causing an accident. Lodges need to frequently review their set-ups to ensure that they are operating in a manner that minimises such hazards and risks. Typical hazards and risks to consider include but not limited to:

- Seismic risks being overall rating of buildings and of falling contents, cupboards, ceiling tiles etc.;
- Exit routes from the building to provide a safe and clear path;
- Electrocutation or injury from power cords and other cabling;
- Loose floor coverings or other trip hazards;
- Lack of definition to nosing's on steps;
- Fire from heat sources including cooking;
- Falling from heights due to non-complying barriers;
- Hygiene in kitchens;
- Hot water temperature;
- Smoking areas near entrances;
- Neglect of building maintenance (a lodge recently had a chair leg penetrate the particle board flooring and topple!).

