



Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KITCHEN FIRE DESTROYS HERITAGE CHURCH

DATELINE POLTIMORE –Saint-Louis-de-France Catholic Church, in the village of Poltimore, Quebec, was destroyed by fire on Sunday, March 2, 2008. Members of the congregation had gathered for a fundraising brunch after morning mass when fire broke out in the kitchen area. Flames quickly engulfed the frame building, but fortunately everyone inside managed to escape unharmed. Residents were deeply saddened by the loss of this lovely church, which was decorated with elaborate paintings on the walls and ceiling. The church was insured, and Father Yves Mayer, the parish priest, stated that they hope to rebuild. The parish was founded in the late 1800s and the church was built in 1937. The devastating loss of this heritage building is another harsh reminder that places of worship must use safe practices when cooking or using kitchen facilities. Basic safety precautions that faith institutions should be aware of include:

Cooking Process

1. Never leave the kitchen while food is being cooked.
2. Be especially vigilant if you are deep frying food. Deep-frying should be done in a purpose-built appliance rather than in a pot on a stove. If a fire starts, call 9-1-1 immediately and evacuate the premises. In order to extinguish a fat fire, turn off the heat source, and cover the object with a metal lid or pan. Only attempt to put out the fire if it can be done safely. Evacuate immediately if the fire is not extinguished quickly.
3. Always keep pot lids near the stove and cover the pot in case of fire. Do not attempt to move the pot to the sink or to put water on it.
4. Do not plug too many appliances into one outlet – this can cause electrical overload and can lead to a fire.
5. Ensure that appliances are safe to use. Places of worship often get second-hand goods donated from members. Examine all cooking devices for wear, burnt switches, frayed cords, etc. All appliances should be approved by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or by the Underwriters Laboratories Canada (ULC).

Protocols

6. Dress for safety – avoid loose clothing, tie back long hair, etc. Use the “stop, drop & roll” technique if clothing catches fire.
7. Keep children away from the kitchen or cooking area.
8. Avoid storing combustible items in or around the cooking area.

9. Clean stoves, hoods, ductwork, and other appliances regularly. Built-up grease burns!

Protection

10. Ensure that your kitchen has a working fire extinguisher and a fire blanket. Your extinguisher inspection company will be able to advise which type is best suited to your needs. Be sure volunteers are trained in their use.
11. Consider installing a wet chemical sprinkler system and a fume hood over your stove(s), especially if cooking frequently or for large gatherings.
12. Consider installing monitored fire alarms. Be sure to test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries semi-annually, or as needed. DUAL smoke detectors are best.
13. Dial 9-1-1 and evacuate the premises immediately. A fire can get to flashover in less than 3 minutes!

Other Risk Management Issues

For more information on other risk management issues, visit our website at www.ecclesiastical.ca. Visit our Press Room or click on the Risk Management tab, then on “Click here to sign up now”. Complete the new user registration form and you will receive a return email confirming your password. Use your password and email address to access our risk management White Papers.

About Ecclesiastical Insurance

Ecclesiastical Insurance is the insurer of choice for Canada’s places of worship. The company was established in the United Kingdom in 1887 and opened in Canada in 1972. Ecclesiastical is owned by a charitable trust and is committed to serving the needs of its customers and the larger community. Group profits (other than funds required for business operations) are redistributed for the benefit of faith and charitable initiatives. Ecclesiastical is rated “A” by A.M. Best, and “A-” by Standard and Poor’s.

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