

# Church beacon guidance

This guidance focuses on the use of gas fuelled beacons. Beacon braziers burning solid fuel, along with any bonfire beacons, should be located well away from buildings to avoid the risk of fire spreading to surrounding property. Separate guidance on bonfire safety can be found on our [website](#).

## RISK ADVICE LINE

Having read this guidance should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our 'Risk Advice Line' on 0345 600 7531 (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, excluding bank holidays) and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist. Alternatively you can email us at [risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com) and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.



Beacons may be of a brazier design, burning solid fuel, or fuelled by Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), which is the generic term used to describe propane, butane, or mixtures of the two gases.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is a colourless liquid which readily evaporates into a gas and has no smell although an odour is added to help detect leaks.

## LPG can be a hazard. Why?...

LPG is extremely flammable and it readily combines with air to form an explosive mix. If this mix is exposed to an ignition source it can result in an explosion and intense fires.

It is heavier than air and will collect at the lowest levels of buildings and flow along the ground. It is supplied in pressurised steel cylinders which can explode if they are involved in a fire.

Safety precautions are essential when using any LPG appliances and there are a number of commonsense measures that can be followed to reduce risks.

## Location of the beacon

The beacon does not need to be located on a tower and there are significant hazards in doing so. Locating on a tower will bring the LPG cylinders into close proximity to the buildings, reduce the operational working area as well as creating access/egress and working at height issues. It will also increase the potential for manual handling problems – remember suitable LPG cylinders can have a gross weight in excess of 40kg.

We strongly recommend that the beacon is located at ground level away from buildings.

## Before the event

Plan, prepare and understand the event.

- Contact your insurance provider to establish if there are any policy cover implications with regard to your plans.
- Inform the emergency services of what you are planning.
- If you complete risk assessments to comply with health and safety law, you may need to review these. In some cases you may need to develop an event safety plan.
- Identify key personnel to control and manage the event.
- Nominate suitably competent persons to assemble, install, operate, connect and disconnect appliances and regulators. It is critical that persons who have the responsibility for the use and storage of LPG understand the characteristics and hazards of the product. Consider training if necessary. Provide beacon manufacturer's instructions, ensure understanding and compliance. Only the propane cylinders designated by the equipment manufacturers must be used.
- Arrange for delivery of equipment as close to the start of the event as possible. LPG cylinders must be stored pre event at ground level in designated safe, secure, well ventilated areas away from occupied buildings and ignition sources and not inside the church.
- Create segregated public and non public operational areas.
- Consider weather forecasts and wind direction.
- Check assembled beacon for leaks using equipment provided. Never use a naked flame to look for leaks.

## During the event

- The beacon must be located on a level, non combustible surface, suitably fixed by the supplied brackets or sandbags draped over the legs, at least 2 metres from surrounding buildings or structures, which must also be non combustible. If locating on a tower or other part of the church you will need to seek the advice of the church architect/surveyor and may need to obtain a faculty.

Within the operational area all combustible and heat vulnerable materials must be removed and all possible ignition sources other than the beacon equipment identified and eliminated.

- The beacon must only be lit and extinguished by competent persons and must be supervised at all time when lit.
- If the beacon is positioned above ground level no more than 2 persons must be in the vicinity.
- Empty cylinders should be treated in the same manner as full ones.

## After the event

- Turn off and extinguish the equipment following manufacturer's instructions.
- After the event a fire watch must be maintained for a period of at least 60 minutes.
- Tidy up and remove refuse and debris, return the LPG cylinders to designated storage area and arrange for collection as soon as possible.

\* Please note this list is not exhaustive

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature and does not constitute legal advice. You are free to choose whether or not to use it and it should not be considered a substitute for seeking professional help in specific circumstances. Accordingly, Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc and its subsidiaries shall not be liable for any losses, damages, charges or expenses, whether direct, indirect, or consequential and howsoever arising, that you suffer or incur as a result of or in connection with your use or reliance on the information provided in this guidance except for those which cannot be excluded by law. Where this guidance contains links to other sites and resources provided by third parties, these links are provided for your information only. Ecclesiastical is not responsible for the contents of those sites or resources. You acknowledge that over time the information provided in this guidance may become out of date and may not constitute best market practice.

