

Automatic Door Time Locks



Churches that normally remain open during the day are increasingly considering the use of automatic time locks to secure the premises at night in order to reduce demands on people's time.

Though these locks offer convenience, they do present a number of disadvantages over a conventional mechanical lock.

These include:

- A key benefit of a traditional key-operated lock is that when a key holder attends the premises to undertake the task, a physical check of the building is also normally undertaken which includes checking that no one is still inside the property.
- Reliance on a time lock means this inspection does not take place on a daily basis and the property may not be inspected for some time and, therefore, any incidents may not be discovered.
- Depending on their quality, these locks can be easy to disable. The door needs to be closed completely for the lock to operate, so any obstruction placed in front of the door to prevent its complete closure will defeat the locking mechanism. In the event of a power failure, the mechanism will usually remain in an 'open' position to prevent people from being trapped in the church. Consequently, in the event of a power failure, the church could be left unsecured. Therefore, you cannot always be certain that the building is actually secure at the end of each day as expected.
- Electro-mechanical locks, where the lock bolt is secured by a latch release type device, may not offer the same levels of physical protection against forced entry as a conventional mechanical lock. Consequently, there is an increase in the risk of theft, malicious damage and arson associated with the use of these locks. It is also possible other damage, for example that

Risk Advice Line

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

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

caused by water ingress, goes undetected for longer than would otherwise occur if someone attended the church to lock-up each evening.

However, we appreciate there needs to be a balance between a pragmatic approach to keeping a church safe and secure and everyday practicalities. In order to assess each situation, we require the following:

- Copies of the technical specifications of any proposed lock mechanism to be installed, so we can understand how they are designed to operate and how they comply with our security expectations
- The lock should be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions by a competent locksmith
- You also need to confirm that regular inspections of the premises will continue to be undertaken by a responsible person. (We would expect the maximum period between inspections to be no more than two to three days.)

In addition, we would strongly recommend the following when the church is open during the day and not just where an automatic lock is in place:

- All attractive portable items, e.g. brass altarware, are stored out of sight to reduce the risk of being stolen. (Wood or plaster substitute items could be used as an alternative.)
- All valuable items are marked with a forensic marking solution, e.g. SmartWater®, and signage is prominently displayed to advise this
- Rubbish and combustible waste are not stored in and around the church
- Candles and matches must be securely locked away
- Petrol and other flammable liquids/accelerants are not stored in the church.

Want to know more?

Other useful information is available at
www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management

Useful information such as how your building can be used for the community can be found at
www.churchcare.co.uk.

Policy cover queries

For queries about your policy cover, call our specialist church team on **0345 777 3322** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at churches@ecclesiastical.com.

Alternatively, please visit www.ecclesiastical.com/church.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.



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