

PROTECTING YOUR CHURCH ROOF – THE ARCHDEACONS’ CHARGE

NEW ROOF ALARMS GRANTS AVAILABLE UNTIL THE END OF 2017

Why metal roofs should be protected by roof alarms

Archdeacons are flagging up the importance of protecting metal church roofs in their Visitation Charges to Churchwardens.

Metal roofs are the top security risk for churches. There have been over 20 successful or attempted thefts in the diocese in the last year. The loss of metal roofs has despoiled our churches and left shock, dismay and often large replacement bills in their wake.

We, Historic England and Ecclesiastical Insurance believe that a combination of approved roof alarms and forensic markers such as SmartWater are the best deterrent against the theft of metal roofs. **Crucially, there are no limits to the cover that Ecclesiastical Insurance gives for the theft of external metal when both are used.**

Installing a roof alarm and marker will discourage the theft of metal roofs. It will save your church money if external metal is stolen and give you more peace of mind in the meantime.

Why you should apply for a roof alarm grant now

Grants totalling up to £4,000 towards the cost of installing roof alarms are now available until the end of 2017. The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust is giving grants of up to £2,000 and can award an additional £1,000 following a generous contribution from the Allchurches Trust. The Diocesan Board of Finance is giving further roof alarm grants of up to £1,000 to the first ten eligible churches that apply.

This funding will help pay for a major part of the costs of installing a roof alarm which typically range from £4,000 to £6,000 plus VAT depending on the church. (The VAT can be reclaimed if your church is listed.) **We strongly recommend that you apply for these grants if you have metal roofs and no roof alarm.**

The application forms for the grants from the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust and Diocesan Board of Finance have information notes which include the conditions of the grants.

A condition of these grants is that parishes pay for maintaining and monitoring the roof alarms which typically costs between £400 and £650 plus VAT each year. If the cost of maintenance for the first year is a barrier to installation then parishes should talk to their Archdeacons to try and find a solution. In the longer term local businesses and groups could be encouraged to support these costs.

More on Ecclesiastical Insurance’s cover and advice

If an approved marker such as SmartWater is used then Ecclesiastical Insurance will cover up to £7,500 for the theft of external metal plus up to £7,500 for damage resulting from the theft such as to roof tiles, the roof structure or masonry.

If approved roof alarms and markers are used together there are no limits to Ecclesiastical Insurance's cover for the theft of external metal and resulting damage. That is up to the sum that the church is insured for through its insurance policies.

Ecclesiastical Insurance's website includes information on the following topics under Risk Management: [Roof alarms](#), [SmartWater](#), [Metal theft](#) and [Church security](#). [Roof alarms](#) gives a list of approved suppliers and a self-assessment tool to help you work out the risk of metal theft for your church.

To contact Ecclesiastical Insurance for advice and information phone 0345 777 3322 or email churches@ecclesiastical.com.

Does my church have a vulnerable metal roof or other external metal?

1. Lead and copper roofs are particularly vulnerable to theft. Other metal roofs are harder to remove but there is a chance that they could be stolen. Ecclesiastical Insurance takes the same approach to all metal roofs with respect to forensic marking, roof alarms and extent of cover.

Churches in remote locations may be more vulnerable but roofs have been stolen from churches with houses close by including in towns. Lead roofs on top of tall towers are less likely to be taken but high nave, chancel and aisle roofs, including those with battlements, are under threat.

We asked parishes to complete our metal theft risk survey form. This helps identify how vulnerable your church and its external metal is to theft; it gives us a picture of the threat facing the diocese's churches and makes it easier to take effective action. **We are grateful for the metal theft risk forms that have been filled in and returned and, if you have not done so, would appreciate if you could do the same.**

While roof alarms and marking deters the theft of metal from roofs, their installation means that full cover is extended to all of a church's external metal including lighting conductor strips.

Protecting church roofs as part of a wider approach to security

The Archdeacons' Charge asked churchwardens to look at their churches like potential thieves, 'casing the joint' and finding weak points. Common sense is key, for example not leaving wheelie bins, ladders or anything else available that could help thieves get on to the roofs and remove metal sheets. So is 'watchfulness' - making regular checks and encouraging church members, neighbours and the community to report anything suspicious. Restricting vehicle access to the church is also important.

Advice

Ecclesiastical operate a dedicated risk advice line for Churches. Please ring 0345 600 7531 (09.00 – 17.00) or email risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com to speak to a specialist Risk Management Surveyor.