

**DIOCESE OF SALISBURY
DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (DAC)**

Brief guidance note

Church Towers: clock weights and lavatories

Many churches now have a toilet, often in the bottom of the tower.

The purpose of this note is to advise churches, church inspectors and project architects that clock weights above a toilet might present a hazard.

Turret clocks that do not have automatic winding systems are driven by weights; these can range from 50 lbs to 500 lbs. A quarter chiming clock will have three weights. Usually the weights will descend until they reach the ground floor, but they can terminate their descent at a floor above. One thing to be always mindful of is what might happen if a weight line breaks. The effect of a 500 lb weight falling say 40 feet, is catastrophic. Clocks are sometime installed with a box of sand or broken bricks to absorb the energy of a falling weight; however a stack of wood could also be considered. A steel plate will further protect lower floors from damage.

The bottom of weight chutes are often used for cupboards for vacuum cleaners etc. If the clock was not wound one week, then the descending weight would come down on the cupboard contents. A case is known of where a consumer unit and electrical switchgear was installed in a weight chute. When the clock winder was on holiday the weight came all the way down and stripped the gear off the wall, no doubt this was attended with a good display of sparks!

Regular maintenance of a clock should involve the inspection of the weight lines, pulleys and point of line attachment.