

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses Congrégation chrétienne des Témoins de Jéhovah



PO Box/C. P. 4100, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4Y4, Canada
Telephone/Téléphone: 905-873-4100 Fax/Télécopieur: 905-873-4554

August 3, 2013

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Re: Safety precautions when attending spiritual programs

Dear Brothers:

In recent years, accidents have been reported in connection with conventions, assemblies, and congregation meetings. The majority of these incidents are falls and injuries that are related to slipping and tripping. Some injuries have been very serious. Because of our deep interest and concern for the well-being of all in attendance at our spiritual programs, we are providing the following suggestions and reminders to heighten safety awareness.—**Read Proverbs 22:3.**

Parking lots, walkways, and other outside areas are locations where many falls occur. Freezing of the ground or settling of the soil can cause sections to be uneven. Small differences in height can cause us to trip. While passing through these areas with large crowds, our visibility may be reduced because of the people in front of us. Therefore, it is very important at these times not to rush.

Many accidents occur on stairs. Each year, thousands of stair climbers are killed or injured. What causes the missteps that result in falls? Generally, people misjudge the distance and plant one of their feet wrong. (*g05 10/22 p. 29*) Please be alert and careful when using stairs, especially in unfamiliar surroundings. In some buildings used for conventions and assemblies, the steps may be different from what you are accustomed to using. Therefore, when using the stairs, please always use handrails where possible. If handrails are unavailable and you are unsure of your footing, seek assistance from an attendant or other fellow Christian. If you notice that someone needs assistance, let Christian love move you to take the initiative to help. (1 Pet. 3:8) Avoid calling out to others or having conversations with them when they are using stairs. Momentary distractions have resulted in falls and injuries.

The April 2013 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry*, page 4, provided the following reminder regarding footwear: “Each year injuries occur that are related to footwear, especially high-heeled shoes. It is best to choose modest, well-fitting shoes that will allow you to walk safely on ramps, stairs, gratings, and so forth.” If the facility where you will attend a convention or assembly has tile or concrete floors or stairs, please wear shoes that do not slip on these surfaces. High-heeled shoes often have soles and heels that can easily slip. Especially when the ground outdoors is wet or is covered with snow or ice, indoor surfaces without carpets or mats will become slippery so that extra caution is required.

Conventions are planned so that more than enough seats are available for the expected attendance, making it possible for you to choose available seats on a first-come-first-served basis. Seating is reserved only for special purposes, such as for baptismal candidates, the elderly, and the infirm, as discussed further below.

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We wish to comment briefly on the saving of seats when the attendants open the doors of the convention or assembly facility. Jehovah is a God of order. Therefore, all things should take place “*decently and by arrangement.*” (**Read 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40.**) When the doors are opened each day, please do not rush to the seating area of your preference as if competing with others. This could lead to injuries. Never should a person’s haste to save preferred seats cause him to ignore godly principles or the needs or safety of fellow Christians. Rather, a self-sacrificing spirit should move all of us to seek the good of others. This identifies us as true Christians and moves onlookers to praise God. (John 13:34, 35; 1 Pet. 2:12) Although we may not always be able to sit where we prefer, we can be assured that we will receive Jehovah’s blessing as a result of our spirit of love and consideration.

Some sections of seats with easy access are set aside for the elderly and the infirm out of consideration for their needs. Because the number of these seats is limited, it is often not possible for all family members to sit together in these reserved sections. In some instances entire families have sat together in these reserved sections, compelling other elderly and infirm ones to find seats less compatible with their needs. This has exposed these dear ones to unnecessary challenges in accessing other seating areas. Therefore, please leave these reserved seating sections for the elderly and the infirm and those one or two persons directly assisting them. If an attendant asks for your assistance to keep seating available for the elderly, please cooperate, even if it means moving to another seating section.—**Read 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5; Philippians 2:3, 4.**

Injuries have also occurred when individuals have tripped over items in locations that should be free from obstruction. These obstructions have included briefcases, bags, and other items on the floor in aisles or walkways. It would be a kindness to remember the importance of placing such items so that they do not block the aisles or become a trip hazard to others. Before attending the event, we should review the size of the bags and other items we are bringing with us. Will these things fit completely under the chairs in a way that will not cause a trip hazard? When we are not at our seats, it would be loving of us to make sure that these items are stowed away under or on our seat.

A noteworthy aspect of our Christian gatherings is the enthusiastic presence of our young ones. While the program is in session, they, too, will want to ‘listen and learn.’ (Deut. 31:12) Parents should supervise the activity of their children at all times so that young ones do not run about and pose a hazard to themselves and others.—**Read Proverbs 29:15.**

How we truly delight in the theocratic instruction that Jehovah regularly provides at our conventions, assemblies, and congregation meetings! (Isa. 65:13, 14) We long for the day when “the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea.” (Isa. 11:9) Until then, may we give clear evidence that divine education and Bible principles shape our view of life and safety.

Please be assured of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,
*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

cc: Traveling overseers

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PS to body of elders:

This letter should be read to the congregation during the next local needs part. Please be sure that the Bible texts marked to be read are read to the audience. Thereafter, discuss during the part how the principles outlined above may be applied locally at the Kingdom Hall in connection with congregation meetings. The body of elders or Kingdom Hall Operating Committee may wish to review the condition of walkways, parking lots, and interior surfaces for potential hazards. Lighting of stairs and other areas having changes of level may be reviewed, along with the condition of any mats or carpets near the entrance of the building. On an annual basis, please share reminders from this letter with the congregation prior to your assigned district convention.

This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the congregation copy of *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders* (S-22) at this time as well.