

By Wisdom a House is Built

Choosing the Right Land for Your Legacy



You've received the green light to build a satellite church or add a new building on your school's growing campus. The next step is finding a site that suits your needs. **Where you choose to build is as important as what you're building.**

Why Due Diligence is Important

Land itself can have a wide range of issues that makes it unsuitable for your build or increases costs at every phase of your build and your occupancy. In addition, traditional property insurance policies generally exclude the land that buildings and other structures sit upon.

"Land issues that crop up during the build that are linked to things like environment contamination from heavy farming, a history of industrial use, or even easement-related problems, generally wouldn't be covered by your property or liability policy," said Brandon Lemberg, a manager of property claims for Brotherhood Mutual.

He notes that such perils are typically only covered by specialty policies, such as environmental, pollution, or flood policies. "When you do your due diligence early in the buying process, you can protect your ministry—and its financial resources—from harm."

Below are key questions to ask during the site selection process that help future-proof your building project by avoiding costly problems during the construction phase, or maybe even years later.

Scoping Out the Problem Areas: Natural Disasters

Flood zones, hurricanes, and wildfires pose costly threats, so don't let your ministry fall victim by unknowingly purchasing property in a known problem area. Being in an area prone to natural disasters can often mean higher insurance costs and additional building requirements to mitigate potential damage.

Ask: Am I purchasing property in a designated flood zone?

Before purchasing property, it is crucial to determine whether the land is in a flood zone. Start by checking the online flood zone map offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Additional flood-related questions:

- What are the typical costs and coverage limits of flood insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program?
- What natural or man-made barriers are in the area to help control flooding and is the community well prepared for flooding disaster and recovery?

Ask: Has the site been affected by hurricanes in the past?

FEMA provides an online hurricane map that shows the likelihood of experiencing a hurricane in a given area. The map also shows expected annual loss based on hurricane frequency. Note that building in a hurricane zone requires structures to adhere to special building codes and regulations, which can add to the overall cost.

Additional hurricane questions:

- What is the elevation of the property?
- Is the property near evacuation sites and are shelters nearby?
- How resilient were public utilities, like electricity and sewage, for past events?

Ask: What's the potential for wildfires near my chosen site?

Properties in wildfire or hurricane-prone areas require special consideration. Building in these zones often means adherence to strict building codes designed to withstand such disasters. The USDA Forest Service offers an interactive tool to help identify high-risk areas and understand the necessary precautions.

Additional wildfire questions:

- What are local building regulations for wildfire-prone areas?
- Does the property feature firebreaks or defensible spaces?

Site History: Do Some Digging

The potential for a natural disaster isn't the only consideration. Contamination, pollution, or other environmental issues left by the previous property owners can cause trouble. Take extra steps to understand the site's soil and groundwater conditions to ensure that you don't have to clean up someone else's mess.

"You'll run into the most issues with your property in urban redevelopment areas," said Robert Silber, a senior risk control specialist for Brotherhood Mutual. "Older buildings are more likely to have had more uses—and problems—that are not immediately apparent."

Ask: Who owned the land previously and how was it used?

Silber explains that, depending on past usage of the property, the soil could be contaminated with chemicals, including pesticides, lead, asbestos, and petroleum products. You can find property records, previous owners, and transfers from your county tax assessor's office or recorder's office. "Neighbors may also be able to give you insight on your prospective location," he said.

Ask: Who should I talk to about scheduling a soil sample?

If a check of the property's historical records reveals that contaminants could be a concern, hire a professional to take soil samples. Contact a certified, local soil engineer—also known as geotechnical engineer—to test your soil. The local zoning and planning department or the local health department can provide help.

Infrastructure: Who (or What) is Your Neighbor?

It's important to know how nearby infrastructure affects the site. Rail lines, industrial parks, and chemical manufacturing plants have the potential to cause chemical spills and additional pollution concerns. Environmental features, like nearby rivers, can result in flooding.

"As part of the lot's overall cost, be sure to factor in how you plan to address pre-existing structures, large boulders, heavy timber, or ponds on the property," said Silber. "These can increase the cost of developing the land to make it acceptable to build on."

Ask: What is the zoning classification of the property?

Zoning and land use regulations determine how a property can be used and what types of structures can be built. It is essential to ensure that the property is zoned for your intended use. Consulting with local planning and zoning departments can provide clarity on the regulations and any potential restrictions.

Ask: How might future developments nearby affect the site?

Lemberg suggests checking your local zoning laws to learn about what buildings may be going in nearby in the future. "If the site is located next to an empty lot or in an up-and-coming area, expect new development." It may be good to look for property elsewhere if areas nearby are zoned for industrial purposes.

Ask: How could current structures on the property affect the cost?

Expect additional costs if you intend on demolishing or repairing buildings or other structures on the lot. Those costs can skyrocket if the structure contains asbestos or lead.

Additional infrastructure questions:

- What are the setback and height requirements for the property?
- Are utilities such as electrical, sewer, natural gas, and internet service in place?

Contractual Provisions: Avoid Post-Purchase Blues

During the contract phase, be sure to include specific provisions that allow you as the purchaser to terminate the transaction with minimal or no loss if certain contingencies cannot be satisfied.

Ask: What approvals and permits are required for the intended use of the property?

Include provisions that define the results that must be achieved and the rights of the parties if those results are not met. Examples of provisions include city and county permits for building, soil and other inspections and tests, and the potential need for court approval if the title of the property is not clean. Your specific area may warrant additional provisions. 🏠



Don't Lose

Stewardship Practices of Thriving Ministries

The modern insurance landscape is much different than it was even five years ago. Record losses, inflation, high construction costs, and more have all contributed to rising insurance costs. This industry-wide trend has many ministries asking questions about how to maximize the value of their insurance.

There are many factors that drive the overall cost of insurance, and losses play a main role. Generally, more losses lead to a higher cost of insurance for everyone.

Several insurance insiders from Brotherhood Mutual share their insights on how to manage risk and get the most from your insurance. They've intensely studied what successful ministries do to protect themselves.

"Insurance is intended to be protection for a large financial loss that an organization couldn't otherwise survive," said Joel Colglazier, assistant vice president of underwriting at Brotherhood Mutual. In other words, it's designed to make you whole again after loss.





Top Tips for Maximizing the Value of Your Insurance

Controlling Cost

To understand how you can control the cost of your insurance policy, you need to understand how your insurance policy is rated. Insurance companies look at your campus and facilities, and your geographic location to determine the types of losses that are more likely for your area, such as fire, coastal storms, hail, and others. They'll also look at the types of losses that are probable for the types of activities you're engaged in. Finally, insurance companies will look at how your past losses might help to predict your future losses.

When it's time to renew your policy, or if you switch insurance companies, one of the things they look at is how many times a ministry has submitted a claim. Frequently submitting claims, even when they seem small, adds up. And frequent claims can increase the cost of your insurance because you're at greater risk of having a larger claim in the future.

This is where the concept of risk management comes into play. "Insurance is one piece of a larger risk management puzzle," noted Colglazier. In addition to having insurance, taking proactive steps to avoid claims altogether is an important step that helps ministries in the long run. "One of the most important risk management steps is to think of your insurance company and agent as a partnership," said Colglazier. Collaboratively working together to strengthen your resiliency is central to Brotherhood Mutual's mission of advancing the Kingdom by serving the Church.

Insurance helps protect the future of your ministry's people and property. While it's crucial to have the right insurance, it's also important to take proactive steps to reduce or prevent losses from happening altogether. Not only does this reduce the chance you'll have out of pocket expenses, but it can help control the cost of your insurance.

Managing Risk

Managing risk helps ministries steward their resources and maximizes the value of insurance. "It's a two-part process," offered Andy Hayton, a regional manager with Brotherhood Mutual. "First, it involves looking at what you can do now to prevent claims from happening in the first place. Second, if you have had a claim, it's looking at what you can do to prevent it from happening again." For example, as you implement policies and procedures or if you add something to your property to improve safety, document that and let your agent know. "This is helpful, especially when you make improvements after a claim event," said Hayton.

continued...

When thinking about risk, there are generally two main areas to consider: **property and liability.**

Protecting Against Property Risk

Property risks are those that affect your buildings, equipment, vehicles, and other assets. These include fire, water damage, theft, vandalism, wind, hail, lightning, and others. Property risks can result in costly repairs or replacements, as well as disruptions to your ministry activities. So it's good to think ahead when it comes to managing risk on your property.

“The bottom line is that ministries need to be proactive and control the controllable. Routinely walk around your campus to identify hazards before they become a problem. Make repairs quickly while they are small and more affordable,” noted Colglazier. “Ministries need to have a plan and budget for the things that can improve safety and resilience.”

Managing Liability Risks

Liability risks are those that affect your legal responsibility for the safety and well-being of others. These include injuries, accidents, lawsuits, allegations, and other claims that can arise from your ministry activities. Liability risks can result in costly settlements, judgments, medical bills, legal fees, and reputational damage.

“I recommend that ministries keep good records,” said Ron Troyer, a senior manager in casualty claims for Brotherhood Mutual. This includes everything from financial decisions to board meeting minutes, volunteer position descriptions, and documenting slips, trips, and falls. Also, it's important to follow your ministry's written guidelines. If you don't have guidelines, start developing them right away.

And when the potential for a lawsuit arises, for example, someone threatens to sue, Troyer's advice is to report it. “We'll investigate and see if there are things that we can do to help you prevent an issue from becoming a lawsuit. If you try to handle it yourself and someone ends up suing you, it may become much more complicated.”

The **risk management tips** on the following page are some of the most critical actions that healthy, successful ministries take when managing their risks and reducing or preventing loss. See **how many of these steps your ministry currently has in place.**



Property Protection Tips

- ❑ **Keep your building well maintained and updated.** A well-kept building shows that you care about your ministry and your risk management.
- ❑ **Make sure your fire sprinkler system is centrally monitored by a professional service.** Keep up on annual and five-year inspections as well as maintenance of your sprinkler system.
- ❑ **Install a flow-based automatic water shut-off device.** This can prevent major water damage and mold growth, which are both some of the most costly and disruptive types of claims for ministries. Plus, it can potentially lower your deductible for freeze claims.
- ❑ **Have your electrical panels** inspected by a licensed electrician at least annually.
- ❑ **Replace your roof** when it reaches its life expectancy. This is important for all roof types, although certain roof surfaces are more prone to wind and hail damage.
- ❑ **Install a lightning protection system** that safely redirects lightning strikes away from your building.
- ❑ **Have your boiler inspected** by a qualified technician at least once a year. Your insurance company will likely arrange for this inspection at no cost to the ministry.
- ❑ **Maintain your HVAC units** and protect them from copper theft by installing cages or fencing around them.
- ❑ **Install a burglar alarm system** that's also centrally monitored.
- ❑ Make sure **rainwater drains far away** from your building's foundation.
- ❑ **Utilize smart technology** to monitor conditions in your facilities on a mobile device. This allows quick action to be taken when there's a potential issue, even if no one is on site.



Liability Prevention Tips

- ❑ **Have written child protection policies and procedures** that outline how you screen, train, and supervise your staff and volunteers who work with children and youth. Conduct comprehensive background checks on all of them and keep records of your screenings.
- ❑ **Have an employee handbook that's been reviewed by an attorney** and covers your policies on hiring, firing, discipline, harassment, discrimination, and other employment issues. Make sure your employees read and sign the handbook and that it's updated regularly.
- ❑ **Use waivers or release forms for any activities that involve physical risks**, such as sports, camping, or field trips. Obtain signed facility use agreements and certificates of liability insurance from outside groups using your facilities.
- ❑ **Slip/trip/fall claims** are often the most common. Have someone periodically walk through your campus and note anything that could cause someone to slip or trip. Start in the parking lot and work your way through your building. Keep a record of who checked it, when, if they noticed anything, and what was done to fix any issues.
- ❑ **Avoid dangerous games or stunts** that can cause injuries or lawsuits. Avoid taking dangerous risks on roofs or ladders.
- ❑ **Have written policies and procedures** for your safety and security measures.
- ❑ When running camps, retreats, or mission activities, **make sure you have experienced and qualified people** leading them. Follow the most current practices and standards for the type of activity and have written policies and procedures, as well.
- ❑ **Review your website and social media accounts** to make sure they reflect your ministry accurately and positively. Avoid posting anything that could be construed as misleading, needlessly offensive, or inappropriate.
- ❑ When you use vehicles for your ministry, make sure your **drivers are experienced, licensed, and insured**. Follow the age and mileage requirements for your insurance and protect your vehicles from theft or damage.
- ❑ Keep your **parking lot** well-lit and free of cracks, potholes, and other trip hazards.

continued...

Getting the Most from Insurance

While every ministry is unique and should work with its insurance agent for specific guidance, there are two additional things ministries can do now to maximize the value of their insurance.

First, consider taking a higher deductible, which means you share in more of the risk of a claim. This can lower your premium while encouraging a more proactive approach to repairing damage instead of making an insurance claim. “Think about how much you’d be able to pay if your property was damaged. Take that maximum number and make that your deductible. You can then take the money you save on your premium and put it toward capital improvement,” offered Jason Petty, an insurance agent with Lightwell Insurance Advisors.

Another way to maximize your insurance is to work with your agent to take a fresh look at your coverage options. For example, having property and liability coverage, commercial auto, workers’ comp, and payroll all with one company can be beneficial for ministries looking to maximize their dollars. Brotherhood Mutual provides all these products so ministries can get access to specialized service and protection from a company that shares your heart for ministry.

Work with your agent to look at whether it makes sense to move some coverages off your main church policy, especially for claims that can’t be avoided. “This is known as unbundling, and it can be a way to protect your main insurance policy from claims that tend to have a higher frequency or severity, like med pay or wind/hail damage,” noted Hayton.

The Benefits of Working with a Ministry Insurance Specialist

One of the best steps you can take to protect your ministry and save on insurance costs is by working proactively with your agent and insurance company that specialize in ministry insurance. “They have the experience and expertise to help ministries prioritize their risk management efforts,” noted Hayton. “The good thing is that ministries insured by Brotherhood Mutual are already working with ministry specialists.”

Since every ministry’s needs are unique, working with a ministry specialist can help you develop a plan quickly, and you’ll have access to the resources that can help you implement your plan. Plus, they’ll be able to advise you on which risk management activities can help with preventing loss and providing potential premium credits.

Now is a Good Time to Start

Risk management is a complex topic, but it’s one you don’t have to navigate alone. The many risk management concepts you’ll read about in this issue of Resilient Ministry all work together to help protect and defend ministries from loss.

You have access to the knowledge and resources to help you succeed. Talk with your agent to get a good understanding of where your initial focus should be. We all share a heart to help you take incremental steps in making your ministry more resilient. 🙏



Top Tips from Insurance Agents



Be selective with minor property claims. “If there’s a question, get an estimate on the repair cost, then determine if it’s worth submitting to insurance,” said Jeff Miller, agent and managing partner with Lightwell™.

Use Legal AssistSM, a free service provided by Brotherhood Mutual. You can get complimentary risk management guidance about ministry-related legal issues.

When considering new activities or new ministries, **talk to your agent if there’s any element of risk.** Why? “Your agent will understand your policy and can help you navigate what’s covered and what isn’t,” mentioned Miller. Additionally, there may be hidden risks your agent can identify that should weigh into the decision about the activities or ministries being considered.

Keep track of any updates you do to your building. “Let your agent know if you replace your roof, update HVAC, improve electrical, install flow-based automatic water shutoff valves, and others,” said Jason Petty, an insurance agent with Lightwell Insurance Advisors.

Use My Account. You’ll get timely notifications and can set up automatic payments, so you never miss a payment. “Late or missed payments can be a sign that a ministry isn’t caring for its property,” noted Petty.

Carefully consider whether you want to submit small claims, even if they have a low deductible. “Broken windows and theft typically have much lower deductibles, but it’s not always in your best interest to file that type of claim,” explained Petty.

Appoint one or two people to handle submitting claims to insurance. “I was meeting with a church leader recently and he had no idea that they had a claim the previous year,” offered Petty.

Avoid \$0 property claims. This is a claim that’s submitted but insurance doesn’t pay. “While there may be a good reason, it can appear as if a ministry simply decided to not fix the damage,” said Petty.


If your building is damaged and you’re working with a contractor for a quote, make sure you’re the one communicating directly with insurance. “This puts you in the driver’s seat when making decisions about whether you want to file a claim or pay for the repair yourself,” noted Petty.

Ask a Specialist

Contact our risk control specialists today. Get answers to questions about safety, facility maintenance, employee training, and more. You also can request an on-site risk assessment.

Phone: 866-231-0363

Email: riskcontrol@brotherhoodmutual.com



Expect the Unexpected

How an Injury Report Can Help

Sunday preaching isn't the only thing in a pastor's job description—and leading a ministry can include a diverse set of responsibilities. For one pastor, the role included playing softball with a youth ministry group. When he headed to the field on a Tuesday evening to pitch in a game, he wasn't expecting his day to end with a trip to the hospital. As the pastor stepped backward to catch a ball, he felt a sudden pain and heard a snap in his lower right leg. An MRI in the emergency room confirmed a ruptured Achilles tendon. Amid the chaos, one of the youth leaders at the game contacted a church staff member so the injury could be reported immediately.

Within weeks, medical bills started rolling in. The pastor needed surgery, physical therapy, treatment for a subsequent infection, a secondary surgery, and more. Because of the timely reporting, workers' compensation coverage provided seamless financial support, relieving the church and the pastor of potentially overwhelming debt. Even as the costs continued to rise, the pastor was able to focus on recovery—without being distracted by incoming bills and administrative tasks that could have resulted from a delayed report.

“When someone is injured on the job—no matter how serious the injury seems—it's important to create an injury report and notify your insurance carrier at the beginning,” said Mandy Muncie, RN, a manager of workers' compensation claims at Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. “The earlier something is reported, the more continuity it can bring to a claim. If your insurer can be on top of a claim from the beginning, it creates better communication between the insured ministry, the injured worker, and the insurance carrier.”

A timely injury report does four things: it fulfills state-mandated reporting laws, shows you are proactive in taking care of your employees, captures the scene, and helps streamline communication with your insurance provider.

“Workers' compensation can be confusing—which is why we don't expect ministries to be experts,” said Muncie. “The most important thing is to report injuries as soon as they occur. Your insurance provider will take care of everything else by connecting you with a claims adjuster, managing the claim, and answering all your questions to make sure your people get the care they need.”

Reporting is Caring

Every state has its own mandated requirements for reporting workplace injuries. Delayed reports can lead to fines and penalties for insurers—but they can also cause more stress for ministries and their employees. When a workers' compensation claim isn't reported immediately, the insurance carrier must backtrack to understand what happened. This can lead to long hours searching through records or confusion with billing. Ultimately, if a report hasn't been completed, employees could find themselves receiving medical bills they aren't supposed to pay, which can leave them feeling overwhelmed with the responsibility of managing all the moving parts.

If your insurer can be on top of a claim from the beginning, it creates better communication between the insured ministry, the injured worker, and the insurance carrier.

“An on-the-job injury can be one of the worst days of someone's life,” said Muncie. “They're in pain; they're shocked; they have a lot of questions—a lot of things are

outside of their control. Connecting with an insurance provider quickly can ease some of those burdens by letting them know there is someone who can answer their questions, handle all the paperwork, and just advocate for them.”

On the other hand, if a ministry delays reporting by waiting to contact their insurance provider, it can cause more frustration for the injured worker. “People who have been hurt on the job might not have any idea what is covered when they go in to receive care,” Muncie explained. “If billing specialists don’t know an injury falls under workers’ compensation, the injured employee might receive statements not just from the hospital where they received care, but also ambulance services, imaging centers, skilled rehab, and more. All of that billing might be incorrect and lead to unnecessary stress on ministry employees. That stress can wreak havoc on the body and affect their ability to focus on their recovery.”

Every state has its own mandated requirements for reporting workplace injuries. Delayed reports can lead to fines and penalties for insurers—but they can also cause more stress for ministries and their employees.

Risk Management Tips: Reducing the Likelihood of Workplace Injuries

While some workplace injuries happen as a result of unpredictable accidents, Muncie offered several risk management tips to help ministries reduce the chances of some common workplace injuries.

Slips and Falls—Be on the lookout for common trip hazards that could spell disaster, such as rugs, cords, steps, uneven floors, and more. “Loose rugs are a huge liability,” said Muncie. “If you have a rug that isn’t flush to the floor, it’s easy to trip—and that can result in serious injuries, especially for older employees.”

Additionally, consider encouraging employees to be mindful of the shoes and clothes they wear to work. Shoes like flip flops or loose sandals are notorious for having bad traction on slippery surfaces. Sometimes a pair of quality shoes can be enough to save someone from slipping. It can also be common for women in skirts to catch their hem while they’re walking or going upstairs—so taking extra caution is important.

Parking Lot Perils—If your ministry has a daycare or school, drop-off and pick-up times are prime for injuries. Ensure that anyone on parking lot duty wears a high-visibility vest to reduce the likelihood of parking lot injuries. Create a process for safely unloading and loading kids from vehicles, which can limit the chances of a staff member getting a misplaced foot run over.

Maintenance Mishaps—Employees who manage your facility and grounds may be more prone to injuries related to overexerting themselves. Muncie recommended having a rotation of responsibilities for various facilities workers so that no one is working too hard on one thing.

If you have questions about how to ensure your ministry can best care for your employees in the event of an injury, reach out to your insurance agent to learn about workers’ compensation coverage that fits your needs.* 🏠

*Brotherhood Mutual workers’ compensation coverage is not available in all states.





6400 Brotherhood Way
Fort Wayne, IN 46825

**Resilient Ministry
Routing List**

- Pastor
- Administrators
- Office Staff
- Board Members
- Facilities Team
- Other

Also in this issue:

**Choosing the Right Land
For Your Legacy**
pg. 2

Expect the Unexpected
pg. 10

Resilient Ministry is a magazine created for churches, schools, colleges, camps, and related ministries.

Published by the Brotherhood Mutual Marketing Communications Team.
Copyright © 2024 Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. All rights reserved.

Insuring America's churches and related ministries®

800.333.3735
brotherhoodmutual.com

Find us on social media:



RM36-2

Don't Lose

Featured Article
pg. 4

insurance trust roof property ministry pe
 staff finances students repair ministry pe
 coverage relationships community ministry equipme
 insurance time trust roof property ministry pe
 ff volunteers students campers well-being confidence vehicle
 coverage relationships community reputation ministry equipme