

CATHOLIC MUTUAL...“CARES”

Thrift Store

A parish thrift store can provide many needed items for our communities such as clothing, furniture, housewares, décor, etc., at an affordable cost to persons who may not otherwise afford to shop at retail stores. These donated items can also benefit the parish as well by creating additional revenue to support the mission of the church. However, with these benefits, there is greater concern and attention needed to recognize and reduce the liability exposures that come with operating a thrift store.

Here are some valuable tips to follow for a safe operation:

- Ensure a clear and safe means of emergency egress is maintained throughout the store. Do not block doors or crowd shelving and clothes racks in areas for egress from the building. Proper signage should be installed above all exit doors.
- Eliminate dangerous tip-over hazards by securing shelving, bookcases, etc. to the wall to ensure a child/person cannot pull the furniture onto themselves.
- DO NOT display cutlery or instruments which can be considered a weapon outside of a locked display cabinet.
- Depending on the size of your thrift store and its storage capability, do not continue to accept donations if there is not ample storage. This creates a fuel load for a fire and numerous trip and fall hazards.
- Illegal dumping is an issue many parish thrift stores have to contend with. For various reasons, many items left on the property after-hours cannot be resold. The cost of properly disposing of these items ends up having to be absorbed by the parish. We recommend that you work with your local law enforcement agency to obtain the city ordinance on illegal dumping and post signs citing that code. As part of your operation, it may be beneficial to inform your community by posting signs stating donations can only be accepted during business hours on one or two selected days of the week.
- Maintain the proper amount of fire extinguishers throughout the building and ensure they are inspected annually. Given the fact that many thrift stores utilize every bit of space, it is very important not to crowd or conceal fire extinguishers, ensuring they are highly visible and accessible for everyone, if needed.
- Do not display heavy items or glass on the top shelves as they could be difficult to remove and could cause injury should they fall on someone while retrieving.
- To reduce the potential for *slip, trip, and fall hazards*, do not utilize throw rugs or have extensions cords on the floor.
- Because some donated items can have defects or recalls, for safety and liability reasons, there are several items which *Catholic Mutual* recommends you do not resale. A list of those items can be found on our website: www.catholicmutual.org - Risk Management – Operations - “*Resale of Items Through Thrift Stores and Rummage Sales.*”

(Rev. 2/16)



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Resale of Items Through Thrift Stores and Rummage Sales

Church operations frequently resell used donated items through a thrift shop or rummage sale. Although such sales can provide a social service to the community, they can produce unique liability concerns related to items donated for resale. Primarily, the liability concerns lie in the resale of items that may be defective or that have been recalled by manufacturers due to defects. Considering the risk involved, it is recommended that the following types of used merchandise not be resold or given away.

***Any item which uses electricity to function**

Fans	Computer Equipment
Toasters	Grills
Heaters	Microwave Ovens
Ovens	Televisions, VCR, Stereo Equipment
Electric Blankets	Major Appliances (Washer, Dryer Dish Washer, etc.)

***Children's Items**

Cribs	Playground Equipment
Car Seats	Portable Playpens
Baby Swings	Mattress
Walkers	

***Equipment Powered by Gasoline, Electricity or Other Motor Fuels**

Motor Scooter	Trimmers/Edgers
Motor Bicycle	Lawn Tractors
Lawn Mower	Leaf Blowers
Chain Saws	Snow Blowers

***Firearms**

This list is not exclusive since there are many items that could be potentially hazardous. Careful consideration should be given to any used item prior to giving it away or selling it as part of a parish rummage sale or thrift store. Product recall information may be found at the Consumer Products Safety Commission website at <http://www.cpsc.gov/>.