



*Jonathan Lane & Associates Ltd*

Registered Office  
c/o M. E. Ball & Associates Limited  
Global House, 1 Ashley Road,  
EPSOM, KT18 5AD

VAT: 990006139

[organbuilder@jonathanlane.org.uk](mailto:organbuilder@jonathanlane.org.uk)

+44 (0)7836 299025

[www.organ-builder.co.uk](http://www.organ-builder.co.uk)

## Advice for churches on the maintenance and care of their organ

There are many places to seek advice about your organ, however, we have assembled a list of relevant information from various sources to help you care for your instrument, which is probably the single most valuable item within your building.

1. Maintain an environment with stable humidity, whose variations are less than 30% around their average value. In British climate, it is about 65% relative humidity, but it varies by region (coastal for example). Most churches in the UK have a relatively high humidity.
2. The heating of any type whatsoever, should comply at all times with the humidity conditions above. This involves heating the least possible, because when heated quickly or slowly for more than 12 hours, the air becomes very dry. It is because of this sometimes irreversible damage the organ builder disclaims any responsibility. The temperature provided by the heating should not be varied by more than 2 ° C per hour.
3. Ensure swell boxes are always opened when the organ is switched off and left, this helps maintain a more stable humidity and temperature between enclosed and unenclosed parts.
4. Ensure nothing is put on the bellows or other reservoirs that can hinder their action and that nothing is stored leaning up against working parts of the organ. In an ideal world, the organ chamber should be easily and routinely accessible for the tuner and kept clear of clutter like music stands, cleaners or flower arrangers equipment. This helps your organ stay in good working order and enables your tuner to spend the most time available keeping your organ in good playing condition. We sometimes lose valuable tuning time having to move both free standing and fixed items, which of course lead to a less thorough tuning than we would desire.

- 
5. Tuning, which includes basic and essential maintenance should happen regularly. There is no hard and fast rule for how often, it maybe once, twice, three times or more a year and depends on the climatic conditions of the church and the intensity of use. It is helpful for the tuner to know in advance of any issues other than tuning ones that might need attention, and at the very least these should be written in the tuning book. Time is inevitably limited, so this ensures any issues are speedily dealt with.
  6. If any work is likely to happen within the church that will create dust, the organ needs to be wrapped and sealed. Your tuner can arrange and carry this out for you, ensuring that as little dust gets inside the organ as possible. Likewise, water damage can occur if building maintenance is not adequate, and careful inspection of the roof above the organ needs to be made especially after severe weather conditions. Water damage can render an organ unplayable and costs a great deal of money to insure.
  7. The organ has great financial value, which needs to be carefully considered when having it insured. We can offer advice on what to insure your organ for. The scrap value is negligible, however, if your organ is damaged beyond repair, the cost of a new instrument is very high, so ensuring the organ is correctly valued for insurance purposes is invaluable.
  8. If you have any queries about problems with your organ it is advised that you talk to your organ tuner as soon as possible. Like most mechanical items, a small economic repair early on is considerably better than a costly major intervention later.

Advice can be obtain from many quarters, we would particularly refer you to the RSCM for more information in work to an existing organ and the options for replacement of an ailing pipe organ or installation of one where none has been before.

Jonathan Lane  
4.iii.14