

# RISK News

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## Fire risks for over-65s

**Over-65s are putting their lives at risk when it comes to the danger of a fire in the home, with almost 80 per cent dismissing the possibility of fire, according to a recent survey.**

Despite the fact that over half of all the people killed in an accidental fire in the home are aged 65 or over, most people in this age group don't consider fire a risk. On top of that, a massive 90 per cent overestimate their ability to escape.

According to research, among over-65s

- 79 per cent think it's unlikely there will be a life threatening fire in their home, yet nearly 1,700 people in this age group suffer fire-related injuries each year
- half think it's unlikely they would die in a fire
- nine out of ten think they'd realise if there was a fire in their home and be able to escape
- a quarter don't think it's necessary to test their smoke alarm every week



The Fire Kills campaign is also reminding over-65s of the very real danger posed by toxic smoke. "Many don't realise that just two to three breaths of toxic smoke could leave you unconscious" said a spokesman. "You've less than two minutes to escape in a fire before your lungs fill up with smoke and you can't breathe - so it's vital that as well as having a working smoke alarm, an escape route is planned and practised. As you get older, it can take longer to evacuate your home safely."

**If you have a relative or close neighbour in this age category, and think they may be vulnerable, then ask them if they have considered what they would do in the event of a fire. If your job involves contact with the elderly in their own homes, again try discussing this issue with them or get them to at least think about it.**

Further advice and tips can be found on the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service internet site at <http://www.norfolkfireservice.gov.uk/>

Produced by the Risk and Insurance section of Norfolk County Council

# Comment

Welcome to the latest issue of Risk News.

With all the budget reductions and job cuts going on you may feel that your stress levels are at a peak and the last thing you want to think about is risk management. However, don't despair. Not only are you encouraged to join in the many staff consultations on the proposed changes but there are also various support mechanisms within NCC to help you cope. Ask your line manager for details.

Your health and well being are probably the most important factors in your life and the information about the free Health Checks and other articles in this issue can help you manage this aspect.

On a seasonal note, Christmas is coming and the goose/turkey is getting fat. Find out on page 6 how to handle and cook it safely so that everyone can enjoy the day.

Finally, we wish all our readers and contributors a happy Christmas. A prosperous New Year may be optimistic but you never know. Fingers crossed!

As ever, if you have any ideas for future articles, awareness raising activities or would like to contribute, please contact us.

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# Christmas lights

**A recent EU study of internal Christmas lighting chains found that approximately 25% had at least one serious safety fault that could lead to fires or electrocution.**

## Advice for consumers

Consumers must be vigilant and take basic precautions to minimise risk. There is strong pressure on manufacturers and retailers to produce Christmas lights as cheaply as possible, as consumers often do not want to spend much money on what are temporary decorations. This can lead to gross violations of safety standards.



- Buy Christmas lights from reputable dealers where basic safety standards should be assured.
- Never leave Christmas lights on when you are out of the house or at night when people are asleep.
- If you suspect there is any kind of electrical or mechanical problem, with new lights or lighting chains you have already been using, don't take a chance. Stop using them and take them back to the shop and complain.

# Safe Driver of the Year

Risk & Insurance and the Road Safety Team have once again hosted the Safe Driver of the Year competition to promote safe driving at work in order to reduce the number and cost of motor accidents within NCC. Although in previous years the competition was for individual entrants, this year's competition was team-based to encourage departments to work together to highlight the risks of driving for work. Nine teams entered from a wide range of departments.

The competition was in two stages

- An online quiz based on the current Highway Code, general motoring risks and statistical data, followed by
- A practical manoeuvring session for the top three teams in a car provided by Road Safety, along with a Reactions and Distractions test, and a Show and Tell exercise – identical to the one used on the DSA Driving Test.

The final results for this year's competition are

**1<sup>st</sup>. Environment, Transport & Development**

**2<sup>nd</sup>. Trading Standards (Public Protection)**

**3<sup>rd</sup>. Children's Services**

**Congratulations go to all three teams but especially to the 2010 winners, ETD.**

The winners received a trophy, certificates and an Eco Driving Session with the Road Safety Team, all presented by Cllr Tony Tomkinson, Chairman of Norfolk County Council. Cllr Tomkinson said "Norfolk County Council has an ongoing commitment to promoting the wellbeing of employees - this is in everyone's interest and enhances the work environment we all share. I would like to congratulate the winning team for their splendid victory. Well done to you all. I hope you keep up the good standards that earned you the top spot in this very worthy competition."



The Chairman congratulates Marcin Kurek, Robert Miller and Gordon Hodgkinson of ETD, alongside Angela Freeman, Risk and Insurance.

# Winter weather

Once again the cold weather has arrived, bringing the potential for burst pipes and other weather related damage. Schools in particular can be vulnerable to freezing temperatures over the Christmas holidays when the buildings are unoccupied for a couple of weeks.

Even though some of our schools will be open for at least part of the time to provide extended school type activities, there may well still be parts of those schools that remains closed and shut up over the break.



We have seen in the past that significant damage can be caused when pipes burst, with classrooms out of action for several weeks and insurance claims costing up to £20,000 each.

Mobile buildings are particularly vulnerable to freezing temperatures and so pipes should be lagged, water inlet systems drained and turned off at the mains, and premises inspected regularly. Taking suitable precautions can prevent damage.

A straightforward checklist for premises managers can be found on the Risk and Insurance intranet site at [Cold weather checklist](#)

## Driving can also be difficult at this time of year.

Roads can be icy or covered in snow, conditions can be foggy and gritter lorries may be about. Muddy spray from other vehicles, such as beet lorries, can cause visibility problems. The colder and damper weather will put extra strain on your vehicle, making it important that the vehicle is suitably maintained and prepared for the conditions.



Back in 2008 we launched the first of a series of **Risk Bulletins**, on the subject of winter driving, and this is available from the link below. It is an easy-to-read short booklet offering guidance and tips to help anyone who may have to drive in wintry conditions.

It is on the Risk and Insurance intranet site at [Winter driving](#)

If you need this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact us on 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.



# Don't be shy boys!

**For many men it often takes a wife's nagging or for them to be in constant pain to get them to go to the doctor. But this reluctance is one of several factors which means too many men are still dying too young.**

The EDP recently reported on a survey produced by the Men's Health Forum.



**One in five men in England will die before reaching the age of 65. It is a sobering statistic, and coupled with another - that two in every five die before the age of 75 - it shows just how much has got to be done to improve the health of men in this country.** More information is available at <http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/livestooshort>

**By comparison, around one in 10 women die before 65 and one in four before 75.**

According to the Men's Health Forum, a charity that aims to tackle these inequalities, it means that almost 100,000 men are dying prematurely each year, compared to about 66,000 women.

A spokesman for the Forum said "Health more naturally becomes a women's issue and men don't like to be seen as vulnerable in front of a GP or they don't like taking part in what they see as an embarrassing process. Men also say they often feel like they are wasting the GP's time. We need men to act on signs and changes in their health and not leave it until they are in crippling pain. They need to take up any offers of screening or services from their GP.

"For younger men it is much more about getting help for mental health problems or dropping out of getting any physical activity. Women are far more likely to be diagnosed with depression, but if you look at the suicide rates three quarters of suicides are by men because they are not seeking help or they are not being diagnosed until it's too late. Also, men are 70pc more likely to get a cancer that affects both men and women".

**All of this helps explain why a woman in Norfolk can expect to live four years longer than the average man, while a man in Norwich is 35pc more likely to die of cancer than a Norwich woman.**

As part of Men's Health Week this year, the NCC Well-Being Team visited Highways Depots giving road workers a NHS Health Check (see page 10 for details). The Well-Being Team also has an extensive range of leaflets and booklets giving guidance on men's health problems such as prostate cancer and other men's health related issues. If you would like any leaflets on men's health, please contact the Well-Being Team on [well-being@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:well-being@norfolk.gov.uk)

# Safer Christmas eating

Many families in the UK will roast a turkey on Christmas day. Preparing a traditional Christmas dinner challenges most people as they are cooking much larger quantities of food than normal.

As a result thawing and cooking times are much longer than normally experienced and so a failure to thaw or roast properly can lead to food poisoning which is one of the worst things that could happen at Christmas.



Although most incidences of food poisoning go unreported it is known that 20% of all poisoning cases are poultry related and that each December several thousand people do report severe symptoms.

To ensure that your Christmas goes without incident there are some basic precautions that should be followed.

## Defrosting a frozen turkey

Plan for this well in advance as it will take a long time.

- Remove from packaging and stand in a tray or similar to collect juices.
- In a fridge at 4°C (39°F), allow about 12 hours per kg, but remember not all fridges will be this temperature – modern ones may run at lower temperatures. A 5kg turkey will therefore take 2 ½ days to defrost fully.
- In a cool room (below 17.5°C, 64°F) allow approximately 3 to 4 hours per kg, longer if the room is particularly cold.
- At room temperature (about 20°C, 68°F) allow approximately 2 hours per kg.
- Always check it is fully thawed, ensure there are no ice crystals in the cavity and that the thickest part of the meat is soft.
- When your turkey is fully defrosted, put it in the fridge until you are ready to cook it. If this isn't possible make sure you cook it immediately.

## Preparing poultry

All poultry will have bacteria present. So,

- Always wash your hands with warm water and soap, and dry them thoroughly, after touching raw poultry.
- Don't wash your turkey (or other poultry) – this is because bacteria can splash onto worktops, dishes and other foods. Proper cooking will kill any bacteria, so you don't need to wash poultry.
- Always clean worktops, chopping boards, dishes and utensils thoroughly after they have touched raw poultry.
- Never use the same chopping board for raw poultry and ready-to-eat food without washing it thoroughly in warm soapy water. (If possible, use a separate chopping board just for raw meat and poultry).

## Cooking a turkey

- If putting stuffing inside, put it in loose and only at one end – this will ensure that heat can circulate inside, allowing the meat to cook at the right temperature.
- Allow about 40 minutes per kg and remember that cooking times will increase if stuffing has been added.
- Always check it is fully cooked and that juices run clear from the thickest part of the meat.
- Rest the meat before serving.

For more details about preparing, cooking and re-using poultry have a look at the Food Standards Agency website. This has lots of useful tips and advice to ensure everything goes as smoothly as possible, at least as far as the food is concerned.

## Other Christmas risks

But it's not just the obvious you need to watch out for.

- Hospitals reported 4 broken arms last year after cracker pulling accidents.
- Three people die each year testing if a 9v battery works on their tongue.
- Five people were injured last year in accidents involving out of control Scalextric cars.
- Eight people cracked their skull after falling asleep while throwing up into the toilet.



***Happy Christmas!***

# Scam alert

As we approach the season of goodwill, it seems that not everyone has your best interests at heart. Rather, there are a number of people out there who are increasing their efforts to try to con you, steal your identity or access your bank details.

## On-line map advertising

One of our schools recently received an unsolicited fax that purported to be a cancellation request notice for advertising but actually was a contract with very tiny small print. If it was signed and sent back, the school would have been liable for at least £3,000 per year.

## Anti virus cold calls

Internet users are being warned about cold callers who offer to fix viruses but then install software to steal personal information. If you get a call from someone claiming to help you and asking such things as “are you on line at the moment?” (shouldn’t they know this, if genuine?) or suggesting they’ve noticed you have a problem with your “Windows computer” then be very wary.



Apparently these scams are being run by large organised criminal gangs, some of whom have actually set up full call centres abroad with hundreds of people in them! This scam must be very lucrative and will no doubt continue until people realise what is happening.

## Pop up messages

Also watch out for pop up window messages on your computer that claim your computer has been infected. These “scareware” approaches encourage users to click through a site hosting malicious or useless software that acts as a front for gathering personal information. Most of the time the software appears almost identical to professional anti-virus products.

These last two types of scams are a fairly recent development that instead of exploiting people’s ignorance, as in the past, actively uses our knowledge and fear of online threats to the criminals’ advantage.

A recent survey by campaign group Get Safe Online revealed that a third of UK internet users are still falling victim to viruses, despite steady improvements in security. Also more than a fifth of users said they had suffered identity theft.

**The key message here is to keep your wits about you but it’s not always easy when you have a 101 things to do and are under pressure.**

# NCC Fraud Strategy - it's working well

A recent survey of County Council managers has found that the [Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy](#) is working well. The survey, which focused on perceptions of the Strategy and the [Whistleblowing Policy](#), was completed by over 400 managers.

In the current economic climate, tackling the risk of fraud and corruption has become more important than ever. In January 2010, the National Fraud Authority estimated that fraud cost £30bn a year with 58% hitting the public sector. We are lucky in Norfolk that fraud is a rare occurrence.

However, the Council, which agreed its Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy in June 2009, is well placed to deal with this increased threat. The strategy relies on everybody working together to combat fraud and corruption in the organisation and knowing how to respond if they are confronted with it.



Norfolk Audit Services (NAS) has been actively promoting the strategy since its inception by issuing bite-sized leaflets, emailing managers across the organisation and providing updates on the strategy through Finance News and Risk News.

The results of the survey were very encouraging as managers recognised the zero tolerance approach to fraud and corruption and were aware of the strategy for responding to this threat. They are also actively promoting it. They believe the Council acts with integrity and see disciplinary procedures as an effective deterrent to fraud and corruption. Perceptions of the whistleblowing policy are also very positive.

The feedback also included suggestions and ideas to improve the support that is given to managers and colleagues. As a result, NAS are now looking at how they can implement many of the ideas. Recommendations include a regular communication that reaches all staff and celebrates the success of the strategy as well as clarifying how it affects staff. Alongside this, NAS is starting to look at its intranet page to determine how it can be made more user-friendly.

“The best way to tackle problems of fraud is by preventing them through staff awareness. Everyone has their part to play in this, thereby ensuring that every penny of public funding goes on providing the best possible services the County Council can provide” said Victoria McNeill, Practice Director of nplaw.

If you want to know more about the strategy and how together we prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute fraud or corruption, contact the Chief Internal Auditor, Adrian Thompson, on (01603) 222784 or email him on [chief.internal.auditor@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:chief.internal.auditor@norfolk.gov.uk)

# Free Health Checks



**Could you be at risk from developing heart disease, stroke, diabetes or kidney disease?**

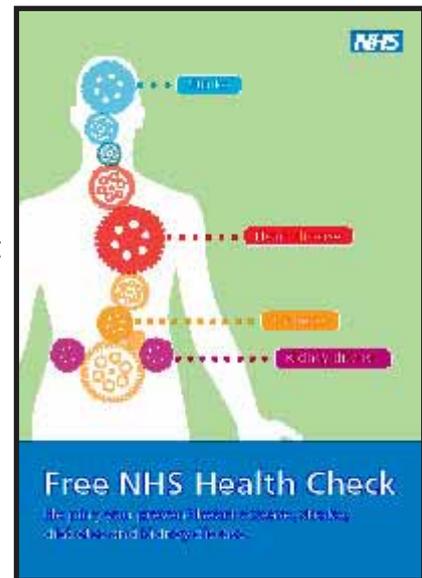
**Have you had a free NHS Health Check?**

Everyone is at risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and kidney disease. The good news is that these conditions can often be prevented – even if you have a history in your family.

The NHS Health Check is part of a new national scheme to help prevent the onset of these health problems. If you are aged between 40-74 years old, you will be eligible for a health check. (If you are outside this age range and concerned about your health, you should contact your GP). The health check can help identify things that could put you at greater risk.

These are

- Being overweight
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol



Both men and women can develop these conditions, and having one could increase your risk of developing another in the future. Even if you're feeling well, it's worth having an NHS Health Check.

## What does the health check involve?

- The check takes about 20-30 minutes to complete.
- You will be asked some simple questions e.g. about your family history and any medication you are currently taking.
- A record of your height, weight, body mass index (BMI), age, sex, and ethnicity will be made.
- Your blood pressure will be measured.
- A simple blood test will be taken to check your cholesterol level (and in some cases glucose levels).

## What happens after the check?

You will be taken through your results and told what they mean. If required, you'll be given personalised advice on how to lower your risk and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

## Where can I get a free NHS Health Check?

The NHS Health Check programme is being delivered by GP surgeries and some pharmacies. Our Well-Being Team has developed a programme of delivering NHS Health Checks, which will be in place until March 2011. These health checks are being funded by NHS Norfolk. In future, it is hoped that checks can be offered in other locations, such as the workplace.

If you would like more information about NHS Health Checks, please email a member of the Well-Being Team on [well-being@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:well-being@norfolk.gov.uk).

## Importance of exercise

There are all kinds of reasons why many of us find it hard to start exercising. Our day-to-day lives require a lot less physical activity than in our grandparents' or even parents' day, most of us own cars and rely on them to get around, and more and more people spend hours sitting in front of computers.

The pressures of home and family life can also mean it feels as if there's little time left to fit in exercise. It's certainly tough to get started. So, it's worth

thinking about what you gain from regular exercise and making even a partial improvement to your fitness. ***Maybe make it a New Year's resolution?***



- Physical inactivity is an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease - in other words, if you don't exercise you dramatically increase your risk of dying from a heart attack
- Conversely, exercise means a healthier heart because it reduces several cardiovascular risks, including high blood pressure
- Being physically active can bolster good mental health and help you to manage stress, anxiety and even depression
- Regular exercise can help you achieve and maintain an ideal weight, which can be important in managing many health conditions, or may just make you feel happier about your appearance
- All exercise helps strengthen bones and muscles to some degree, but weight-bearing exercise, such as running, is especially good in promoting bone density and protecting against osteoporosis, which affects men as well as women
- Different exercises help with all sorts of health niggles, such as digestion, poor posture and sleeplessness, and physical activity can be beneficial for a range of medical conditions, from diabetes to lower back pain

# Risky business

## Latest scam alert

A colleague in Risk and Insurance recently received a phone call at home that shows a worrying development in the way that criminals are now operating. The call was actually answered by his young son who was asked by a foreign sounding “gentleman” if his parents were about. When he said no, the child was then asked if he could find his mothers cheque book or credit cards and tell the caller the numbers on them.



Fortunately the lad realised something wasn't right and put the phone down - but what if he hadn't?

## Contractor approval

### How do you assess health and safety with contracted works for supplies and services?

If you are currently not using the NCC Management of Contractors Policy and Procedures, available on

PeopleNet at [contractor approval](#) or the NPS contractor list when you place orders we would like to hear from you.



The range of services and supplies include plumbing, electrical work, tree surgery, building maintenance, window cleaning, training provision, transport and providing equipment in the community.

The Health, Safety and Well Being Team would be very interested to hear from you if you are approving your contractors using a different evaluation or approval method (as well as if you need to approve contractors you are already using). This will help them to review the existing control measures and make any appropriate improvements. Please let them know on [healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk)



## And finally . . .

Officially, the line has always been that there is no compensation culture in Britain and that it's all the fault of the media who blow things out of proportion. This means that people believe what they read or are told and perpetuate the myth, despite the fact that the number of claims made is actually falling.



So how to explain websites such as [hairlawyers.com](#) or [hairgonewrong.com](#) (these are real – look them up!) which are there to make it easy for people to try to claim compensation for having bad hair?