

Risk News

Issue 18

Raising awareness - lowering risk

June 2002

Here comes the sun!

As summer is almost upon us (no, really), we take a look at some of the risks that can arise at this time of the year.

Most people feel better when the sun is shining, but you do need to take certain precautions to avoid possible problems in the future. A tan is actually a sign that your skin is being damaged and is trying to protect itself. The darkening of the skin is its reaction to over-exposure to the sun's rays.

If you work outdoors, it is not difficult to protect yourself from the effects of the sun.

Remember to :

- ◆ **Cover up** with a wide brimmed hat to protect your ears and the back of your neck.
- ◆ **Keep your top on.** Clothing acts as a barrier to the sun's rays. A loose T-shirt is ideal.
- ◆ **Wear good quality sunglasses** that comply with BS2724 : 1987.
- ◆ **Use a sunscreen** of at least factor 15 on any parts of your body you can't cover up.
- ◆ **Keep an eye on your skin.** See your doctor if you have any moles or freckles that change shape, colour, size, become itchy or inflamed, or which weep or bleed. If caught early enough, skin cancer can normally be treated quite easily.



Each year 40,000 people in the UK are diagnosed as having skin cancer. 2,000 die from it and the numbers are rising. Skin cancer is the second most common type of cancer in the UK.

Further advice is available from Corporate Personnel on ext 2912 or the Department of Health website www.doh.gov.uk/sunsafer.

Special features

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Comment

Welcome to the latest issue of Risk News.

This issue takes a bit of a seasonal theme by looking at some of the risks associated with summer and outdoor activities. We don't want to put a damper on things, but a timely reminder of what can go wrong will hopefully avoid any problems. Our lead article looks at the risks of too much sun. Skin cancer is one of the fastest rising diseases in the UK but by following basic advice, you can look after yourself and protect your health.

We also look at the increasing issue of crimes against school premises. This is costing the County Council and schools significant amounts of money. Costs of these claims are now higher than ever before in the last 9 years. Just because schools contain ever-increasing quantities of valuable equipment, it shouldn't mean that break ins will also rise. Schools and others need to ensure that the level of their security matches the desirability of the items they want to protect.

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Do you feel stressed, harassed or bullied?

Do you want to find out how to cope?

Then this could be for you . . .



The **European Week of Safety** takes place in October this year, with the theme of work related stress. The Council is linking in with this week to raise awareness about the risks and promoting ways of managing and dealing with this important issue.

How you can help

More details about the week will appear nearer the time. At the moment we are putting together ideas for events and activities and need your input.

If you know of techniques that are effective in helping to manage stress in your work area, please contact the Central Safety team at County Hall on ext 2912. We will include them in a Risk News 'Health & Safety Week' special planned for the autumn.

Who manages risk?

Continuing our series on managers of risk within Norfolk, we profile Alan Tidmarsh, Director of Corporate Resources.



One of Alan's many roles within NCC is to be chairman of the Chief Officer Risk Management Group (see below). As such he oversees our corporate approach to managing risks throughout the authority.

"I believe the disciplines and principles of risk management are very important. By following them, the authority is forced to focus on the key areas and prioritise the issues by importance.

"A good example was our recent work on the Re-thinking Inspection Pilot. We looked at every one of our 74 corporate goals and assessed each of them as a low, medium or high risk. We rated each one in terms of the likelihood of factors arising that could cause us to fail to achieve the goals and the impact on the authority and service delivery if we did fail.

This produced a list of priorities on which efforts will be concentrated and will ensure we are in a better position to achieve our targets.

"This approach will lead to a rationalised system of priorities for management of the authority and for future measurement of performance. Whether we are aiming to increase attendance levels at schools or attract external funding for a new initiative, the process of evaluating and managing the risks runs along the same lines.

"The implementation of a new risk strategy, the risk-based approach to decision making and the work of the CORMG will, I hope, lead to an integration of risk management into the County Council and its decision making process within the next twelve months."

Risk management – a corporate approach

Risk management within the County Council operates on a corporate basis through the Chief Officer Risk Management Group (CORMG). This group is made up of representatives of all departments and currently meets on a monthly basis.

Its role is to direct and co-ordinate risk management, including health and safety, across the authority. This will include approving departmental risk plans and the annual corporate risk plan, monitoring compliance with the new strategy, and developing the risk strategy to ensure it remains relevant.

The group will ensure that we are addressing the risks that can have the greatest impact on the organisation as a whole, particularly those that will affect service delivery.

If you would like this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Derek Gorrod on 01603 222989 or 223833 (minicom).



School crime rising

As can be seen from the graphs on this page, crimes against schools are rising, both in terms of the number of incidents and the costs.

The number of insurance claims for vandalism and break-ins have risen in the past three years by 65% and costs by a massive 177%. Costs of claims in 2001/02 are estimated to be nearly £260,000.

As the County Council self-insures the first £250,000 of each claim at a school, and schools bear a £100 or £200 excess on each claim they make, the costs are becoming a serious drain on resources.

So what can be done?

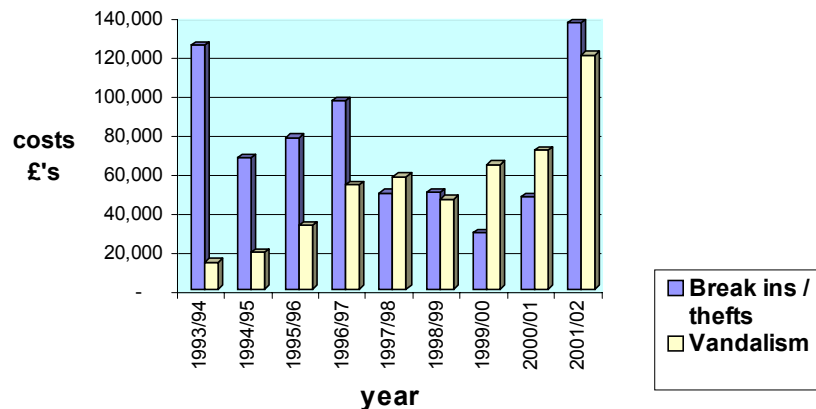
There are a number of measures that can be taken to reduce the risk of theft.

Walk-in thefts

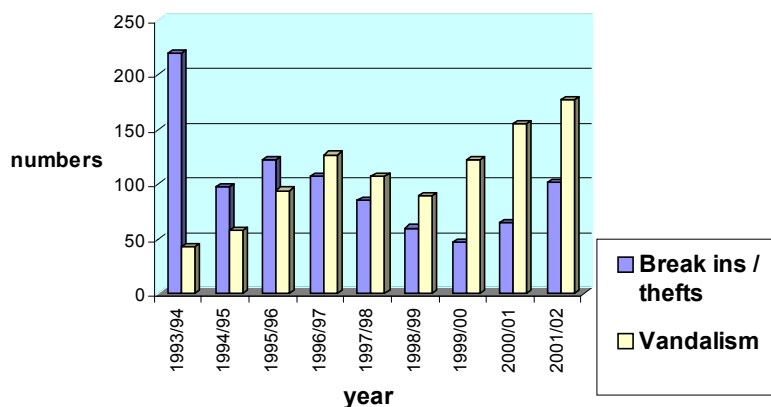
Each year several schools will experience a walk-in theft as someone enters the school during normal hours and removes valuables. This can be limited by reducing the number of ways onto a school site and into buildings to an absolute minimum. Appropriate access controls should be put in place by the main entrance to prevent people just walking in. Security can be improved by:

- ◆ Visitor badge schemes for all visitors
- ◆ Physical barriers such as digital locks or electronically operated locks controlled from reception

Cost of crimes



Number of crimes



- ◆ Not allowing visitors to wander about unaccompanied
- ◆ Vigilance by staff and pupils
- ◆ Keeping rooms with valuables locked when not in use.

Laptops

Just because these are portable, doesn't mean they should be left lying about where anyone can get to them. At night they should be locked away in cupboards or storage rooms, preferably in alarmed areas. During

the day, care should be taken that they are not left unattended.

Precision balances

Many school science rooms will have 'high-precision' balances. These are worth several hundred pounds each and every year some get stolen. They are often sought by the drugs trade because they are accurate. The balances should be kept in locked cupboards when the premises are not in use, and certainly not left where they can be seen from outside the buildings.

Security marking

All valuables should be security marked in a permanent and obvious manner to deter a thief. Merely marking equipment with an ultra-violet marker pen is not sufficient. New equipment should be marked as soon as it arrives on the premises and this should become part of the normal goods receiving process.

Keys

Keys, especially those for external doors and suited locks, need to be kept in someone's personal possession at all times. We recently had to pay out over £25,000 because someone walked into a school and took the school keys from the caretakers jacket that was hanging in his office. All external locks had to be changed and new keys had to be cut – a very expensive business!

Intruder alarms

To be effective these need to signal off site where someone will respond to the activation. It would also be sensible to review the coverage of the detectors within the buildings. As room use changes over time, you can end up with high value rooms not being alarmed while low value ones are. There may also be a need to extend the alarm system to cover more areas with high value contents.

What about vandalism?

It is more difficult to keep people out of school grounds than out of the buildings. Nevertheless, there are measures that can be taken.

- ◆ Don't turn a blind eye to trespass. Keep boundaries and gates secure. Whether it be the local public using the school as a short cut, or youngsters just hanging around, it all creates the impression that the school is a public area and people can do what they like – it isn't and they can't.
- ◆ Sometimes it can be beneficial to allow parts of the community to use the grounds, **with permission**, as this provides extra pairs of eyes to watch over the property. Make an assessment of whether this would be helpful or might lead to trespass by others.
- ◆ Consider organising a 'Schoolwatch' or similar scheme to oversee the site. Alternatively, security patrols might be a more practical solution – these can normally be arranged to suit a variety of circumstances and are often cost effective. An expensive solution, but possibly effective would be to install CCTV.
- ◆ If vandals get on site by a certain way, such as a low or open gate, look at ways to prevent them. This could be by a higher gate or fence, or a camera overseeing the area.
- ◆ If petty vandalism is not dealt with, the amount of damage can increase and may eventually lead to arson.

Further advice on school security is available from the Risk and Insurance section at County Hall, ext 4416 or 2989.

The risks of summer.....



At this time of year there are a number of risks that can affect people, both when they are at work and in their own personal lives. Here we look at several of the issues and offer guidance to make you safer.

Personal security

When the weather is warm and you have to work indoors, it is common practice for windows and doors to be kept open for ventilation. If this involves doors that are normally secured to the outside to prevent unauthorised access, the security of the property will be breached.

Teachers, and others who may find themselves in this position, need to be **aware** of the increased risks. They should **remain vigilant** to what may be going on around them. Be **more suspicious** about strangers who may be on the premises or someone acting oddly.

When many windows and doors are open, the opportunities for theft increase. Do not leave handbags or jackets / wallets within easy reach of the outside, even if you are in the room. Valuable pieces of equipment, such as laptops, should also be out of reach of the thief.

Garden security

One in seven gardens will be subject to a theft this summer, according to the Association of British Insurers.

“Most gardeners seriously underestimate the value of items in their garden, leading to a lack of care over equipment.”

- ◆ Garages and sheds normally contain all the necessary tools to break into your house, or someone else's. Therefore they should be protected.
- ◆ Valuables should be locked away in a shed or garage if they cannot be kept indoors.
- ◆ Where possible, tools should be security marked, perhaps by die stamping the postcode into their casings or handles.
- ◆ Remember, any security is only as effective as the weakest link. Fitting a high security padlock to a shed door is pointless if the hasp is only held in place with a couple of small screws, or the wooden door is rotten.
- ◆ Do not leave ladders outside overnight. If they cannot go in the garage, secure them on their side with a heavy chain and padlock to something solid to prevent them being moved.

House security

Burglars like the warm summer months because there are so many opportunities to commit crime.

People spend more time in their gardens, which means that the house can be unoccupied for much of the day. If the weather is warm, windows and sometimes even doors can be left open. This is all a thief needs.

They can be in and out in a few seconds, without the owners even knowing - until later when they look for their wallet or handbag.

The risks of summer.....

Barbecues

Preventing accidents

Recent studies into the hazards of barbecues show that the rate of accidents occurring has risen by 50% in the last five years. 38% of all accidents involve children under the age of 7.

Good advice is to:

- ◆ Keep children away from hot barbecues and provide adequate parental supervision
- ◆ Do not add lighter fuel or other flammable liquids to a burning or warm barbecue
- ◆ Never leave a lit barbecue unattended
- ◆ Never use a barbecue indoors or in confined spaces.
Charcoal gives off carbon monoxide when burning and without ventilation can kill
- ◆ When cooking, do not wear loose clothes that could catch fire if the flames flare up



Food safety

Each year there are many instances of people getting food poisoning from outdoor catering activities. To avoid problems, follow these tips.

- ◆ Do not store raw meat above cooked meat in a fridge.
- ◆ Always defrost meat in the fridge rather than in the open air, before cooking.
- ◆ Keep food cool, covered and off the ground.
- ◆ Light the barbecue well in advance and make sure the coals are glowing red (with

a powdery grey surface) before starting to cook.

- ◆ If possible, pre-cook poultry in the oven or microwave, and then take it straight to the barbecue to finish it off.
- ◆ Wash your hands often, especially if handling raw and then cooked meat.
- ◆ Eat food as soon as it is ready.
- ◆ Don't be tempted to undercook food just because diners are getting impatient.
- ◆ Throw away all perishable food that has been left outside for more than a couple of hours.

Driving

There are a number of potential hazards to driving at this time of year:

- ◆ **More insects** about will mean more get stuck on your windscreen. Make sure washer bottles are kept topped up and that windscreens are kept clean and smear free.
- ◆ Check **windscreen wipers** for damage after the winter and replace as necessary.
- ◆ **Low evening sun** can cause problems for drivers. Keep a pair of sunglasses in your car to help you see.
- ◆ After a spell of dry weather, **roads become slippery** when it rains. A coating of oil, grease and tyre rubber with water on top will give little grip and drivers need to drive more slowly and be aware that braking distances will be longer.
- ◆ **Higher pollen counts** can create problems for hay fever sufferers. Some medications can cause drowsiness so be aware of what you are taking.
- ◆ Warmer evenings can lead to **more pedestrians and cyclists** being on the roads.
- ◆ The police will be running a **summer anti – drink drive campaign**. Don't be a statistic.

Catton Grove Middle

- 9 months after the fire

Last October we reported how Catton Grove Middle school had suffered a terrible fire in the summer holidays, and that efforts were underway to co-ordinate a recovery. Nine months after the fire, we look at how the recovery is going and what the experience has been like for the school.



From this...

Immediately after the fire a group of people got together to decide how best to get the school back up and running. Representatives from Education, the school, the Insurance section, NPS and the loss adjusters looked at a number of options but the main priority was the education of the pupils.

Within six weeks a series of temporary buildings were on site, replaced two months later with portakabins (see above). These were equipped with the necessary teaching resources and facilities. **Just two weeks schooling was lost.**

This solution gave some breathing space. Efforts were then split between putting values to the separate parts of the claim and designing and costing options for a permanent building.

With an insurance claim such as this, it is not just a question of rebuilding the school as it was before the fire. People had differing ideas on what they wanted the new school to be like and the opportunity to create a better building was taken by the Education Department. However, the insurance only pays for what was lost, so the cost of all the enhancements comes from Education budgets.

Even the amount of insurance money received is not straight forward as the sum has to be negotiated with the insurers. It is a combination of extra expenses necessarily incurred as a direct result of the fire and the notional costs of replacing what was lost, but excluding costs deemed unnecessary by the insurers.



to this...



to this..?- maybe not!

Plans have now been drawn up for the design of the new school and building work is expected to start this June. The aim is to complete the rebuild by Easter 2003 - twenty months after the fire.

So how have the school and staff been affected? Headteacher Tim Lawes explains.

"Basically we're all knackered! All the staff have put in a huge amount of work and effort to provide a full education to the pupils.

"As the fire happened in the summer holidays, many staff did not get a full break. Then we moved into temporary buildings twice in two months. This all took its toll.

"But, everyone has pulled together. Staff are getting used to using different teaching resources, with the consolation that at least everything is new. Even though the buildings are temporary, they are of a good quality and both staff and pupils have settled in well.

"It's not particularly pleasant to be working in a demolition or building site, but everyone is coping!

"Obviously we wish the fire hadn't happened, but when it is finally all over next year we will have a new school.

"All the effort will have been worthwhile and we will have a very bright future."

Are you sitting comfortably?

Unsuitable seating can cause us to adopt awkward postures that can lead to discomfort, back pain and upper limb disorders.

Buying chairs

Who is it for?

The size of the seat needs to cater for the size of the user comfortably and be deep enough to support the legs (but not so deep that shorter people cannot use the backrest).

- Is the chair for general use or an individual?
- Does the individual have any additional needs that should be considered? (Do you need to consult your Personnel section about an Occupational Health referral?)



The working environment

Different types of castors are needed for different types of floors. Operator chairs are normally provided with castors for carpeted floors, but these are not suitable for smooth floors (concrete, lino, etc.).

Tips on healthy posture:

The chair is only as good as the way it is used. Take time to read the instructions for your chair and take full advantage of all the adjustment possibilities:

- Your feet should rest flat on the floor not on the chair base.
- If you can't sit at the correct height with your feet flat on the floor, you may need a footrest.
- Keep your back in contact with the backrest.
- Position the lumbar support area of the backrest (the bulge at the bottom) in the small of your back.

Adjustments

The most common adjustments are seat height and backrest height/tilt. These are required when individuals work with display screen equipment for significant periods of time.

Backrests

The backrest needs to give firm support to the lower and middle part of the back.

Armrests

For most tasks, armrests are not essential. However, some people prefer them, while others dislike them.

If armrests prevent someone sitting close enough to their workstation consider adjustable arms (the chair that it is), or simply removing them altogether.

Safety Notice

Do you have a Project Navigator or Navigator Plus chair? We have received a safety notice about these that the arm bracket may be defective.

The model numbers to look for are:

CMNPFA	CHNPFA	DBK70	DBK70
NBK	NBK	65	68
KBK	KBK	55	58
TBK	TBK	45	47
LBK	LBK	35	

You can find this number on the underside of the chair.

If you have one of these chairs please contact Tim Howard in the Department of Finance on 01603 222820.

Hard sell 1

Be warned....

The National Anti-Fraud Network have recently advised that a company calling themselves Active, and subsequently ACL, have been targeting schools looking for contact names. It would appear that they are yet another organisation attempting to sell fluorescent tubes. They use hard sell tactics and can be very persistent and intimidating.

We recommend that you deal with ESPO where possible or only other businesses that you know.

If you have any doubts about the name or nature of the organisation calling, do not give them contact names or fax/send them documents containing your establishment's address.

Hard sell 2

Another scam that has appeared again involves cold calls made to schools. The caller claims to represent some sort of publication relating to "local disabled children" and thanks the school for their financial support in the previous year. The caller goes on to say that they are putting together a tribute publication and "as the school is a supporter" will include the school name for a fee.

Whether there is any such publication is open to doubt; certainly the schools who have contacted us have never had any dealings with such an organisation and have not given any money previously. The person calling will normally ask directly for the head teacher, saying the call is a "personal thank you to the head", will give their name (or a name anyway) but will not name the organisation nor disclose a telephone number to ring back.

Our advice is to ignore all such calls. Just because someone says your school or organisation gave money doesn't mean its true.

Risk assessment training

We all know that a properly implemented programme of risk assessments can assist in the prevention of injuries, fatalities, property damage incidents and other losses. Effective risk assessment not only helps to prevent human loss and suffering but also assists the effective management and finance of our organisation.

Thorpe Adult Education Centre, near Norwich, is offering a training programme leading to the CIEH Risk Assessment Principles and Practice Certificate. Successful completion of the programme will enable candidates to:

- ◆ Contribute to the risk assessment programmes at their place of work
- ◆ Conduct risk assessments (provided they have the necessary technical knowledge in relation to the activities/environment/issues being assessed)
- ◆ Organise and implement a risk assessment programme
- ◆ Participate in the identification of specific training needs for the activities being assessed
- ◆ Assist employers in meeting legal requirements and promote improved standards of health and safety within their organisations.

The training programme lasts for 9 hours and can be delivered over 2 half days or 3 sessions of 3 hours. At the end of the training, in order to be awarded the CIEH Risk Assessment certificate, candidates must complete an assignment that is a risk assessment study on their own workplaces or activities.

Department heads and individuals interested in this training can contact Thorpe Adult Education Centre on 01603 435857, e-mail judy.youngs.edu@norfolk.gov.uk



Safe and sound -

Safety support in NCC

There are many titles for what are traditionally known as safety officers, such as advisers, managers or co-ordinators.

What is their role?

Roles vary, but some of the common tasks undertaken by safety advisers include:

- Inspections for physical hazards (e.g. slip and trip hazards) and audits of systems and procedures.
- Accident investigations, to try to identify how incidents may be prevented in the future.
- Advice on projects, both at the planning stage and during the actual work.

The HSE document 'Successful Health and Safety Management' (HSG65) gives a useful overview of the role and functions of safety advisers. These include advising on:

- Formulating and developing health and safety policies, not just for existing activities but also with respect to new acquisitions and processes;
- How organisations can promote a positive health and safety culture and secure the effective implementation of a health and safety policy;
- Planning for health and safety including the setting of realistic objectives, deciding priorities and establishing adequate systems and performance standards;
- Day-to-day implementation and monitoring of policy and plans including accident and incident investigation, reporting and analysis;
- Review of performance and audit of the whole health and safety management system.

How can my department's safety adviser help?

If you want help or advice on an issue, or need a safety input into a project you are planning, just call your adviser. If you don't know who this is, see the list opposite.



Health and Safety Contacts

Corporate Health and Safety Manager

James Royston
Ext. 2912

Chief Executive's

Ann Hacon
Ext. 3268

Cultural Services

Sue Clarke
Ext. 3332

Department of Finance

Ann Hacon
Ext. 3268

Education

Gerry Wilson
Ext. 3989
Paul Commins
Ext. 3470

Fire Service

Louise Woolnough
Tel. 01603 819370

Norfolk Audit Services

Irene Bezzant
Ext. 2779

Norfolk County Services Limited

Ian Harper
Ext. 2953

NPS Property Consultants Limited

Clinton Powell
Ext. 2067

Planning and Transportation

Tony Branchley
Ruth Mann
Tel. 01603 810593

Social Services

Chris Minns
Ext. 3087

Risky business

School trips ban

A recent court case in Lancashire received much publicity and was hailed as a 'landmark ruling' when a 16 year old boy received £3,000 in compensation after being barred from going on a school trip. The boy is diabetic and claimed under the Disability Discrimination Act.

What actually happened was that the boy was accepted to go on a watersports trip to France and had paid his deposit. Before this trip took place, he went on a skiing trip with the school where he collapsed with a hypoglycaemic attack because, according to the school, he acted irresponsibly by failing to test his blood sugar levels for three days. As a result, the school felt he could not be trusted to look after his own health and so refused to take him on the watersports trip.

What the school failed to do was to undertake any sort of risk assessment before reaching their decision and then failed to consult the boy or his father. The judge therefore found that the school had discriminated against the boy. The judge said "I find the decision that was taken was fatally flawed in the manner in which it was initiated and thereafter taken and considered".

It is illegal to deny opportunities to disabled people, or treat them less

favourably, without justification. Where reasonable and practical, adjustments should be made to accommodate disabilities.

Councils pay out £100m for injury

Local authorities paid out over £100M in personal injury compensation claims last year, according to the Association of Local Authority Risk Managers (ALARM).

Most of these claims related to accidents on poorly maintained highways or ill health caused by sub standard housing. Levels of claims are rising, partly inspired by no-win-no-fee advertising and by the media's preoccupation with blame and claim issues, although some also result from a lack of funding.

Depending on your point of view, local authorities are either causing £100M of injury to the public and are being rightly made to compensate them, or time and money is being wasted as funds are diverted away from front line services such as schools and social services.

Either way, vital funds are not available to provide services. By using suitable risk management



techniques, injuries can be avoided and funds put to better use.

Driving at work

As we have previously reported, the government and other agencies are adopting a tougher approach to at-work road risks in a bid to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused to drivers while at work.

It is estimated that there are now 20 different Acts of Parliament that could be used by the police and the Health and Safety Executive to prosecute offenders. Targets can include not just individual drivers, but also line managers, senior officers and the organisation itself where a serious at-work incident has arisen.

And finally . . .

According to the Daily Telegraph, a woman reported her husband for exaggerating his injuries in a car accident, after he walked out on her within hours of collecting his £385,000 compensation sum. The scorned wife's act of revenge has now led to the husband having to repay £250,000 to the insurance company.