

The Safety Valve

Building safety into our culture

Health and Safety Week

What and when is Health and Safety Week?

Health and Safety week is a Europe wide event to raise awareness of key health and safety issues. In this country it starts on 14 October.

What is the theme for this year?

The official European theme is 'working on stress' which means risks such as stress, violence and bullying. However, in Norfolk County Council we are widening the scope of activities to cover other health, safety and wellbeing at work issues.



What kind of issues?

As part of the 'Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy' there are eight priority programmes. Actions will be targeted across the country to reduce accidents and ill health in these areas. You can find articles on six of the eight areas in this special newsletter.

What events are happening in NCC?

Look for the adverts in this newsletter!

Where can I find out more?

If you want to know more about the national priority programmes go to the HSE web site www.hse.gov.uk and look for the Revitalising Health and Safety page.

If you want to know more about the European Health and Safety Week try looking at the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work website - www.osha.eu.int/ew2002

STOP PRESS!

Committed Council

Norfolk County is using this year's Health and Safety Week as a chance to reaffirm our commitment to health and safety, with a new Health and Safety Policy 'Statement of Intent' from our Chief Executive Tim Byles.

At the time of going to press, the content of the policy statement has yet to be finalised. However, as Health and Safety Week draws near, details of the policy statement should begin to leak out.

But fear not, because as soon as we have it we will make it available to you! Check out the Health and Safety Week page on the Corporate Personnel Intranet Site for the latest news on this story.

The new policy statement will replace the now familiar green Safety Policy poster that can be found on notice boards throughout the County Council.

Get involved

Those nice people in our Risk and Insurance Section are funding a number of events and activities for the week, including this newsletter. But you can also get involved – so why not . . .

Put a health and safety item on your team meeting agenda and use it to talk about how your work can be made safer and healthier.

Carry out an inspection of your work area to spot any hazards present - you could ask your local trade union safety representative to assist, or ask someone who works in another team to act as a 'fresh pair of eyes'.

Look again at accidents that have occurred over the past year to see if you can identify any actions that would prevent a recurrence.

Ask the person in control of your building if a fire drill could be carried out during Health and Safety Week.

Review risk assessments of your work activities to check if they are still ok.

If a colleague gets a copy of the Culture Survey Questionnaire, ask them for a copy and complete one yourself.

Or, ask your department's safety adviser for a questionnaire.

Find out what Health and Safety Week events are happening in your department.

Give this copy of *The Safety Valve* to a colleague.

Visit the Health and Safety Executive website:

www.hse.gov.uk,

or the website for the European Health and Safety Agency:

www.osha.eu.int/ew2002

Make a decision to start reporting near misses and not just accidents that result in injury.

ABSOLUTELY FREE!

Does your body need an MOT?

Then come along to one of the FREE personal health MOT sessions at the following places in October.

Monday 14th - County Hall

Tuesday 15th - Benjamin Court, Cromer

Wednesday 16th - County Hall

Wednesday 16th - Mildred Stone House, Great Yarmouth

Thursday 17th - St Edmunds, Attleborough

Friday 18th - Woodlands, Kings Lynn

At the sessions you will get a check over by a nurse from our Occupational Health provider Cavell and Lind.

All you need to do is ring (01603) 222802 to book your 20 minute appointment.



Book early to avoid disappointment!



for the latest details - go to http://intranet.gov.uk/personnel_intranet/Contents/health_safety_week.asp

Stressing the positive

Being under pressure often improves our performance and can be a good thing (ask any athlete). But when pressure becomes excessive it can lead to stress and the symptoms caused by stress are bad for you, both mentally and physically.

If you have ever felt under stress don't worry because you're not alone, as it can affect us all during our working life. Stress is thought to be the EU's second most common work related health problem after back pain.

However, stress is not a mental illness and stress related illness can be treated successfully in the majority of cases. The most difficult part is to recognise the symptoms and make the decision to seek help from your manager and/or doctor.

More information about stress in general can be found on the HSE Web Site www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/stress and the European Agency for H&S at Work Web Site <http://agency.osha.eu.int>.

An 'educated' response

Recognising the effects of stress the Education Department has instituted the 'Well-Being Programme'. The well-being initiative started in 1999 and has grown to include over 200 Norfolk schools and most of the LEA.

The process starts with a confidential and anonymous review questionnaire for all staff. A 'tailor made' programme is then developed for the school or section based on the feedback received.



Another key feature of the programme is the training of Well-Being Facilitators. Their role is to ensure that well-being issues are highlighted at team meetings and that the programme is kept on track.

Sessions have also been arranged to raise awareness of the early symptoms of stress as well as practical ways to cope. These include diet, exercise and basic relaxation techniques.

Staff perception of their well-being has improved in over 70% of those areas that have joined the programme and the 'Norfolk model' is now being promoted in other LEAs through the Teacher Support Network Employee Assistance Programme.

For further information about the Programme, visit the Well-Being website on www.esinet.norfolk.gov.uk/wellbeing or contact Hilary Clutten (Programme administrator), or David Saunders (Programme Co-ordinator) on 01603 222326.

The Shudda Squad



Despite best intentions, Les had missed the obvious problem

Are you being set up for a fall?

Falls from height at work cause 80 deaths a year and around 5,600 major injuries such as fractures.



Many of those killed on ladders and stepladders are carrying out tasks lasting 30 minutes or less. The three main causes of ladder accidents are:

- Inadequate securing and positioning
- Climbing when carrying loads
- Over reaching and over balancing

Although there may only be three steps to heaven - or the hospital's A&E department - here are the 'lucky 7' rules to remember when using ladders or stepladders, whether at work or at home.

1. Firm and level?

Never use bricks, timber or any other packing to gain extra height or for levelling up.

2. The 4 to 1 rule

Ladders should be placed at an angle of 75 degrees - one measure out, for every four measures up.

3. Make sure its secure

Tie the ladder at the top (by the stiles, not by the rungs) Secure it at the bottom (e.g. stakes, sandbags, stabilisers, etc). Or use a second person to foot the ladder.

4. How high can you go?

The overall length of a ladder or stepladder is not the same as its usable length.

On a ladder there should be at least three rungs above the highest rung that you have to stand on. A general rule for stepladders is to keep your knees below the top step of the platform.

5. Face up to the job

Position stepladders at right angles to the work, so you are naturally facing the wall or item you are going to work on.

6. Maintain three points of contact

Keep both feet on the steps and hold the ladder or stepladder with one hand while you work.

If you need to carry tools up a ladder use a shoulder bag, tool belt, etc.

7. Don't over reach yourself

Always keep your body within the uprights while working.

Never try to bounce a ladder or stepladder to get it into a new position.

Culture Club at NCC

Not so much karma chameleon, as karma-on and fill in a questionnaire.

What's in an organisation's culture? Well, if you think of a positive safety culture as being a collective commitment to safety, then culture can be very important.

To find out what kind of safety culture we have in NCC, we want your opinions on how well health and safety is managed and your ideas about how things could be improved. To do this several Department's will be sending out a questionnaire to a random sample of staff during Health and Safety Week.

The questionnaire is actually the Health and Safety Executive 'Climate Survey Tool'. The tool has been successfully used as part of the Planning and Transportation Department's DTI sponsored project to improve everyone's commitment to health and safety.

If you do receive a questionnaire please take the time to fill it in. Alternatively if you would like to fill one in, please contact your Departments Safety Adviser and ask them to send you one.



Violence at work

Violence at work is a growing issue. The latest national figures estimate that there are 1.3 million violent incidents at work every year.

The staff attitude survey carried out in NCC earlier this year showed that 28% of respondents had experienced verbal abuse at work and 6% had experienced a physical assault.

Violence at work can affect all service areas and not just those that deal with clients and the public face to face. But what can be done about it? Well, one area that is trying to address this area is the Libraries Service of Cultural Services.

Within the Libraries Service systems have been put in place to record and analyse all incidents and to risk assess the activities with a known or potential risk of violence. Controls in place include training, security devices, management support, guidelines on personal safety, consideration of environment/layout, job design etc.

This is a start but it is recognised that more work is needed. Particularly, to encourage the reporting of violent incidents so there is a clear picture about the extent and nature of violence at work.

However, the attitude of employees is a key factor in reporting violence at work. Many employees report that they have to deal with aggressive people on a daily basis and that '*you get used to it*'.

As a consequence there is under-reporting of violence.

Although it is the minority of customers, clients and service users that cause a problem, the impact of these incidents cannot be under-estimated.

Whatever the scale of abuse towards staff simply trying to do their job it must be regarded as being unacceptable.

Driving can be a pain in the back!

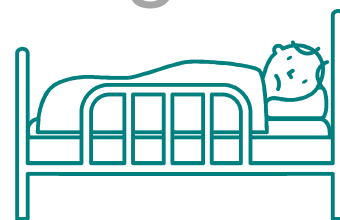
Most of us have to drive for work purposes at some time. For some this is nothing more than an occasional short journey but for others the time spent behind the wheel is more significant.

Without taking adequate steps to prevent back pain you could be one of the two thirds of adults who experience severe and long term back problems. Whether driving for work or leisure, you may think you are doing the right things. But are you?

Ensure you have supportive and adjustable seating

- Make sure your driving position is comfortable and all controls and switches are within easy reach.
- Ensure you can depress the clutch without over stretching.
- Sit in an upright position and do not hunch over the steering wheel or slouch in the seat.
- If you have lumbar support, adjust this to provide a gentle pressure on the lower spine. If your vehicle does not have this feature you may benefit from a back support or lumbar roll.
- Keep your chin up and don't grip the wheel too tightly – this tenses muscles and adds to stress.

Slip into something comfortable



Ouch! Slips, trips and falls are the most common type of accident accounting for a third of all reported accidents nationally.

Norfolk is no different. There were 311 slips and trips reported by employees of Norfolk County Council last year.

However, it is possible to reduce the number by following some common sense principles.

Hazard

Spillage of wet and dry substances

Suggested action

Clean spills up immediately. After cleaning the floor may be wet for some time so use appropriate signs to tell people the floor is still wet and arrange alternative bypass routes.

Trailing cables

Position equipment to avoid cables crossing pedestrian routes, use cable covers to securely fix to surfaces, restrict access to prevent contact.

Rugs/mats

Ensure mats are securely fixed and do not have curling edges.

Change from wet to dry floor surface

Suitable footwear, warn of risks by using signs, locate doormats where these changes are likely.

Poor lighting

Improve lighting levels and placement of light fittings to ensure more even lighting of all floor areas.

Changes of level

Improve lighting, ensure tread nosings are clearly visible.

Slopes

Mark changes in slopes, provide hand rails.

*One final precaution for all you cool dudes:
Don't wear sunglasses in dimly lit areas or indoors. You won't look cool with your leg in plaster!*

Take regular breaks

- Walking gets the circulation flowing in your back as well as your legs reducing the risks of conditions such as Deep Vein Thrombosis.
- Take frequent breaks – a few minutes here and there can prevent injury and pain.

Getting in and out

- Try to avoid twisting when getting in and out of the vehicle.
- Don't jump down from vans and trucks as the repeated impact can be very damaging to the spine.

Fit for work?

Want to feel the burn, eat your way to a healthier life style, or just take a moment to relax? Well, whatever your choice we have the session for you.

During each lunchtime of health and safety week, tutors from Norfolk Adult Education Service will be leading a variety of sessions at County Hall.

Monday 14th - Yoga

Tuesday 15th - Aerobics

Wednesday 16th - Everything you ever wanted to know about stress and diet

Thursday 17th - Relaxation techniques

Friday 18th - T'ai Chi

Each session will start at 12.30. But places on each session are limited so call 01603 222802 now to book your place.



Auntie Ann - taking the agony out of Health and Safety

Auntie Ann's photo casebook

DON'T FALL FOR IT! The safety adviser is carrying out an annual office inspection with Susan



Auntie Ann says.....slips, trips and falls account for most of the accidents in offices and many of them are through untidiness.

It is the responsibility of everyone at work to create a safe working environment and life is more comfortable without a blocked passageway (Mark will confirm this)!

It would have taken two minutes to move the wire (and fan) out of the way of where people might be walking which is why we need to build safety into our culture.

Auntie Ann says.....

In this case a bump cap is the right thing for you to wear because they are designed to protect your head when you bump into things. However, if the key hazard was things banging into you (e.g. falling objects) then a hard hat would definitely be the right choice of head gear.

Be-COSHH you have to

Dear Auntie Ann,

Very recently I've started using a chemical that has an orange square on the container. But whenever I use it I've got an irresistible urge

Should I be using protection?

Dear Auntie Ann,

I often go into the boiler room in our building where there are lots of pipes and other things that I could bang my head on. But I'm confused as to whether I should wear a bump cap or hard hat.

The bump cap is certainly more stylish, but I'd rather not lose my head over this issue if I should be wearing a hard hat. Please tell me, what is the right thing to do?

Win the Chief Exec's trophy!



Last few days to enter!

As you read this there could be only a few days left to get your entry in for the Chief Executive's annual trophy.

The trophy, which is back after a one year absence, is given to the team, school, section, unit or department that has made the best contribution to keeping people safe and healthy at work in the last year.

Have you done something that has helped?

If you feel that you have done something that has helped to keep people safe or healthy at work please let us know.

It could be on any health and safety related issue, e.g. stress, violence, slips and trips, manual handling, safety on the road, awareness raising or training.

The award will be presented to the winning team, school, section, etc. during this year's European Health & Safety Week, which begins on 14 October.

Nominate your own area or another

Please remember that you can nominate your own area or another. If you would like an entry form:

- Contact the Central Safety Team on 01603 222802
- Download one from the Health & Safety Week page on the Corporate Personnel Intranet site
- Or download one from the Education Department Esinet internet site

The closing date for entries is 27 September 2002.

to find out what the hazards are, how it should be used safely and if I should be wearing any protective clothing. As an environmentally aware person I'm also worried about how any of the substance that isn't used should be disposed of. Is there something wrong with me?

Auntie Ann says.....

On the contrary, you're thinking about the right things. In the first instance you should speak to your line manager to see if a COSHH risk assessment has been done (COSHH stands for Control of Substances Hazardous to Health). If neither of you are sure if a risk assessment has been carried out then speak to your Department's Safety Adviser.

The purpose of carrying out a

COSHH risk assessment is to answer questions about how a substance should be used, stored and disposed of safely. Thankfully manufacturers are required to provide lots of information about hazardous substances on a Product Safety Data Sheet, which means that employers don't have to be chemical scientists to deal with COSHH properly.

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