

# RISK News

Issue 37

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## Winter weather

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

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.

The previous issue of Risk News 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 in both pdf and webpage format at [Risk Bulletin - winter driving](#)

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Produced by the Risk Management section of Corporate Finance

# Comment

Welcome to the latest issue of Risk News.

As I sit here in County Hall on a Monday morning freezing due to inadequate heating, it seems appropriate that this issue contains a number of topical articles about winter. From the potential impacts on our buildings to how to manage the risks of the winter vomiting bug, all are issues that we need to be aware of to mitigate problems.

We are also approaching the season of resolutions. This issue contains an article with helpful advice, firstly about not being over-ambitious, but also where to get help and guidance to give you a better chance of achieving your goals. If you do make a New Year's resolution, good luck.

We also report on the Safe Driver of the Year competition that recently concluded with Tony Palmer from P&T being declared the winner. Congratulations to him and thanks to everyone who entered.

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

***Merry Christmas!***

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# Be a savvy shopper

## Follow Trading Standards top 10 tips:

1. Shops don't have to take things back unless there's something wrong with them but often help out of goodwill. Ask before you buy.
2. Check if the shop has special arrangements for unwanted Christmas presents. Ask if they will give you a gift receipt.
3. If you need to return anything, proof of purchase is very important. Keep receipts in a safe place as soon as you start shopping.
4. Check presents before wrapping them. This will avoid disappointment on Christmas day and allow you to sort things quickly with the shop.
5. Think about using a credit card for goods costing over £100. You get extra protection if things go wrong, for example if goods turn out to be faulty.
6. Be very careful with seasonal 'Christmas Shops' and one-day sales that appear overnight. They may disappear just as fast once Christmas is over.
7. It's a very busy time of year so make sure you order presents in plenty of time. Ask the business to confirm the delivery date in writing.
8. If you are buying over the internet, using a credit or debit card will give you extra protection from fraud.
9. Always stick to age warnings on toys and look for safety marks like the Lion Mark. Make sure younger children don't get hold of toys made for older ones.
10. Check all toys for loose parts or sharp points. Don't be tempted to buy cheap fakes as they're likely to be poor quality and could be unsafe.

Need more savvy? There's lots more at [consumer information](#)

# Arson About

Ian, his girlfriend Molly and his best mate Stueey are on a night out to the fair. But hanging over the two boys is the accusation that one of them has been sending threatening notes to a teacher. They decide to go into their school after evening classes have finished to investigate.

But when Ian has to make a choice between his girlfriend and his best mate, he is literally playing with fire. Who will he choose and what will be the consequences of the teenagers “just arsing about”?

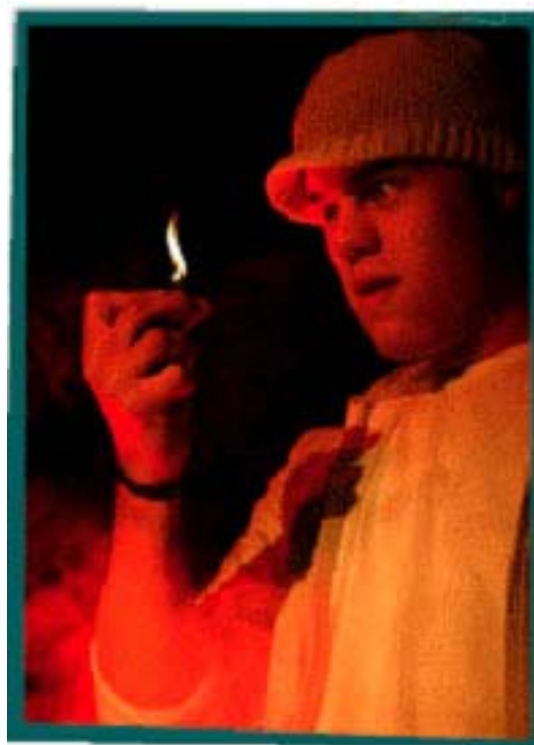
**Arson About** is provided FREE to schools by the Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service and is a 75-minute theatre-in-education programme for Year 8 students, comprising a 45-minute play and a 30-minute workshop.

## The workshop explains:

- What arson is and why it is a problem
- What are the consequences for perpetrators
- What are the consequences for victims and the community

The play demonstrates that “a bit of fun” with fire can easily escalate into a tragedy. The workshop develops the audiences understanding of the crime of arson and why it is such a problem, and looks at the consequences on victims, perpetrators and the community at large.

**For further information** - Contact [Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service](#)



## Links:

- [Arson About Teachers Pack \(PDF\)](#)
- [Arson About Poster \(PDF\)](#)
- [Stopwatch Theatre Website](#)

# European Week of Safety and Health

In the last edition of Risk News we told you about this year's campaign and what we were aiming to do to contribute. We took the opportunity to review a number of our guidance documents, and new guidance has now been issued on:

- **Risk Assessment**
- **Personal Safety Guide**
- **Laptop User Guide**
- **Home Working Assessment**
- **Employee Checklist**
- **Managers Checklist**

All documents can be found on the health and safety pages of the intranet or Norfolk Schools site.

European Week of Safety is not just one week in the year, it's the opportunity to make changes to improve the health and safety of yourselves and your service users.

## New Asbestos management strategy

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous mineral silicate that was widely used between 1950 and 1980 as insulation or for fire resistance in buildings. However it is now known to have ill health effects and is no longer used. Known ill health effects include; Asbestosis, lung, stomach and throat cancer and Mesothelioma, all of which can be fatal.

We have surveyed our buildings to identify locations where asbestos is or may be located. All premises will have an asbestos register providing this information.

### So why don't we remove all asbestos from our buildings?

Generally, asbestos is only a risk if you disturb or damage it and cause fibres to be released into the air. If asbestos containing materials are in good condition and in a position where they are not going to be disturbed or damaged then it is safer to leave them where they are and ensure that the risks are managed.



New guidance on requirements to manage asbestos in buildings is now available. If you are a premises manager or responsible for any buildings occupied by Norfolk County Council staff, you need to make sure you are aware of your responsibilities under the new strategy.

The strategy and a quick managers guide to the responsibilities can be found on [HR@Norfolk](mailto:HR@Norfolk) and the [Norfolk schools](http://Norfolk schools) site.



# Winter Vomiting Bug – don't pass it on!

Cases of Norovirus, otherwise known as the 'winter vomiting bug' always increase at this time of year.

With symptoms including vomiting and diarrhoea, the virus is very easily spread from person to person especially in places where groups of people are in close proximity for reasonable amounts of time, such as within schools and workplaces.

As it is a virus there is no specific treatment and the symptoms tend to last for around two days. However, even after the symptoms have cleared up people may still carry the virus and infect others up to three days later.

Good hygiene is the key to preventing yourself or others from becoming infected – this includes thorough hand washing, especially after using the toilet. Food preparation should also be avoided until three days after symptoms have gone altogether.



Don't be tempted to go back to work too soon after you feel better, you could still be infectious. Current advice is to remain away from work for 72 hours after you feel better. This is particularly important if you work with vulnerable groups such as children or elderly people.

## Christmas decorations are a safety hazard!

### Bah humbug!

Safety officers get blamed for being killjoys and stopping activities from happening, including banning Christmas decorations. This is not true.

They enjoy the spirit of all things Christmas as much as everyone else, as long as people are putting decorations up using a suitable ladder and not standing on a wheeled chair! Decorations shouldn't be placed above/near to heat sources such as fan heaters etc, and Christmas lights should be included in your portable electrical equipment testing and maintenance programme.



The Council has recently signed up to the HSE's sensible risk campaign to demonstrate our commitment to a sensible approach to safety, not to banning activities from taking place.

To find out more about this campaign visit: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/principlespoints.htm>

# Highways liability claims

The previous issue of Risk News reported that we are able to defend over 4 in every 5 claims submitted to us for damage or injury arising on the highway.

***So why is this? Surely if someone damages their car driving into a pothole it must be our fault because the pothole was there. Well, no. . .***

The law requires Norfolk County Council, as the Highway Authority, to maintain all highways for which it has a responsibility. The law sets out what is meant by maintenance, and some things are excluded, for example, it does not include keeping a road free of mud.

To identify the level of maintenance required a programme of inspection is carried out. The frequency of inspection is dependent on the classification of the road or footway. When a defect is identified on an inspection or is otherwise reported, any necessary repairs will be carried out or the area made safe.



If a claimant thinks the Council has in some way failed to maintain the highway, then they will have to prove this. They will have to show that the highway in question has not been maintained with regard to approved standards and was therefore dangerous.



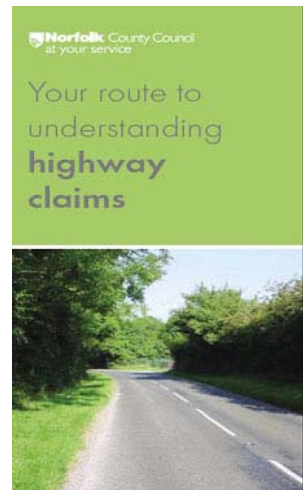
If this can be proved they then have to show that this was the cause of the incident, and that they have suffered a loss as a result.

Even if they can prove these things, the law gives a defence to the Highway Authority, and it will not have to compensate if it can demonstrate that it took all reasonable steps to ensure the highway was safe. This means that all inspections and repairs had been carried out as planned or reported.

Norfolk has nearly 10,000kms of highway. It is not practical or affordable to inspect all of it on a daily basis. Instead we have a programme of regular inspections that takes account of usage and risk.

However, in icy or wet conditions, potholes can arise in a single day as vehicles cause damage to the road surface or the edge of the highway. This is scant comfort to the poor motorist who then damages their vehicle in the pothole but does not mean we have been negligent.

To help the public understand about the law and duties of Highway Authorities, the Council produces a pull out leaflet setting out the information above as well as how to make a claim. This is available on the intranet at [Highway claims leaflet](#)



## Safe driver of the year

Many congratulations go to **Tony Palmer** from the Planning and Transportation department who has been declared the Norfolk County Council Safe Driver of the Year.

Beating off the challenge from Darren Mortimer and Charles Hare-Winton, the other two finalists, Tony was adjudged the safest driver after a 90-minute drive under the watchful eye of one of NCC's driver development trainers.



To get to the final, the three contestants had to firstly complete a Highway Code test and then successfully undertake a practical manoeuvring exercise against the clock. The standard was generally high, (with a couple of exceptions!) but they made it through.



Apart from the kudos of winning the competition and the respect of his peers, Tony will receive a driving experience of his choice as his prize.

As Tony said, "I enjoyed taking part in the competition. I am very pleased to have been judged the overall winner, and would say that the driving assessment and development training that I received as a lease car driver helped me significantly."

**TONY PALMER RECEIVING HIS CERTIFICATE AND TROPHY.**



# Norfolk Support Line

## – for issues big and small

**Norfolk Support Line**  
**0800 169 7676**

**Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**

**Tis the season to be jolly ... but sometimes it isn't easy if you have things on your mind.**

Most employees have heard of Norfolk Support Line, the free confidential counselling and advice service for Norfolk County Council employees and their families. However, there is a misconception it is only for the big emotional, legal and financial issues of life, such as depression, divorce or bankruptcy.

Norfolk Support Line can help with **any** issue that is affecting you, and at this time of year the issues can mount up. Worries about the family coming round at Christmas, being able to afford the presents, or even anxiety at having to go to the office Christmas meal.

For further information, go to: [Norfolk support line](#)

So don't let the little issues build up and suffer in silence. Contact Norfolk Support Line on 0800 169 7676 and speak to a counsellor, solicitor or independent financial advisor. And who knows, you may find this Christmas it **is** the season to be jolly.

**According to the British Retail Consortium the average family accumulates 18% of their annual borrowing in December by spending twice as much than in any other month of the year.**



If you need this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the Helpline on 01603 638138 (minicom 223833) and we will do our best to help.





# Corporate ICT Security



Here we profile Carl Blackett, NCC's recently appointed Corporate ICT Security Manager.

With a career starting with British Airways as an avionics technician, and then computer support and IT security with Norwich Union, he joined us in June this year.

His role is to be the corporate lead on ICT security, working very closely with our Information Security people and all business areas to ensure that we have suitable security measures and procedures in place. Raising awareness amongst users of their responsibilities is a key element of the role.

As Carl says, it's not about clamping down on users and preventing them from doing things – rather it's about ensuring suitable controls are in place to manage the risks involved for the activities proposed. Those controls will depend on the threats and the importance of the data involved. "Safe enabling" as Carl calls it.

## **So what changes are we likely to see in the future?**

With the increasing use of data transfer, such as email and other forms, there is a need for a secure method of doing this. Government Connect is a secure information portal for public bodies to use to allow information to be passed between them without compromise or loss. NCC is working towards achieving the necessary standards to be able to apply to use it.

An increase in the advice and information available to users. As part of this, Risk News will feature regular articles by Carl. If you have a question or need to contact him, tel 01603 638317 or email [carl.blackett@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:carl.blackett@norfolk.gov.uk)

## Loss of data

Loss of data is very high profile these days, with, it seems, not a week going by without someone losing confidential, personal or even secret information somewhere in the UK. NCC is trialing a new reporting form and procedure to enable an assessment to be made of the importance of the lost data. This is to allow the organisation to manage the loss and mitigate any damage/publicity arising.

Did you know that if you lose any data you must report this to your line manager and your Departmental Information Security Officer (DISO)?

All losses, whether due to theft or accidental loss, need to be reported. This is particularly important if the data was on a mobile device, such as a laptop, PDA or Blackberry, or a data storage device such as a USB memory stick or Pen Drive.

All DISOs are listed on the intranet at [DISOs](#).

# Stop giving up giving up

## - achieve your New Year's resolutions!



You know how it is. New Years Day. Belly swollen from eating too much over the last few weeks. Head throbbing a bit. House is a mess. So you start the year deciding to: get fit, stop smoking, cut out drinking, start reading more, get organised, lose weight, and probably some more stuff too, ALL AT THE SAME TIME!

But we all know what happens next. You fail at one or two of them within seconds and immediately your good intentions start to collapse like a shabby house of cards.

**Instead, work on changing one thing at a time.**

The following websites may help you to achieve some of your new year's resolutions:

- **Fitness and weight loss** – information on healthy eating and physical activity can be found on **BBC - Health** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bigchallenge> a great site filled with really useful information. Some of the topics are: Keeping Fit at Work, Coping with Stress, Healthier workplaces, Work Station Ergonomics, Healthy heart, Big Challenge Health Club, Emotional Well-being, Physical Health, Balancing Family and Work,
- **Active Norfolk** [www.activenorfolk.org](http://www.activenorfolk.org) This has a comprehensive activity listing, including sports clubs and leisure facilities in Norfolk, healthy eating plans.
- **NCC - Staff Discount Scheme** These pages contain information about special offers and discounts for staff at Norfolk County Council including several health clubs. Look under Market place [Staff Discount Scheme](#)
- More information can be found on the well-being website; <http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/cex/wellbeing/>
- **Finances** – Norfolk Support Line provides advice on financial issues and debt matters – visit the NSL website; [http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/hr/Content/support\\_line.asp](http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/hr/Content/support_line.asp)
- **Smoking** – for tips and advice on how to quit smoking, visit the Cignificant website at <http://www.cignificant.co.uk>. Alternatively, contact Paddy Lorenzen on 01603 223338 to book a free appointment with a representative from Cignificant.
- Drink or drug-related conditions - for tips and advice on how to cut down on your drinking, and information on the damage to your health from drugs and alcohol check out the following websites at <http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk>, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/healthy\\_living/nutrition/drinks\\_alcohol](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/healthy_living/nutrition/drinks_alcohol) or <http://www.hse.gov.uk/alcoholdrugs/index.htm>

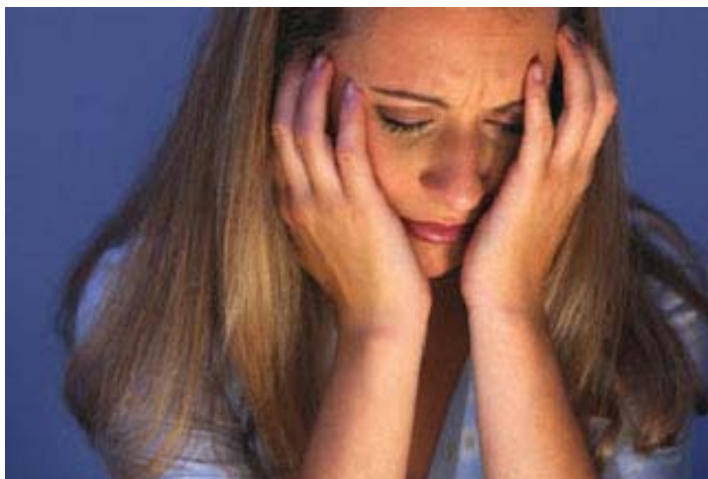
**Remember cutting down on your alcohol intake can also help with weight loss**

# Beat the winter blues



**Research suggests that 1 in 10 people suffer from winter blues, often referred to as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). However, there are plenty of practical tips to help enhance your mood at this time of year:**

- Try to get some fresh air and day light every day by going for a quick walk at lunchtime, or doing outdoor activities at the weekend. The exercise will release endorphins that make you feel good, boost your energy, and keep you fit.
- Socialise with friends or family.
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables to boost your immune system and energy levels. If salads do not seem appealing at this time of year, try homemade soups and vegetable stews.
- Keep drinking plenty of water (at least 8 glasses a day) to maintain concentration, energy levels and good health.
- Treat yourself - consider personal mood enhancers such as a massage to help your mind/body balance, a new haircut or outfit, or treating yourself to a night out.
- Be aware that comfort foods and drinks such as chocolate and caffeine will give you a short-term energy boost but will result in an energy slump, mood swings and can lead to feelings of anxiety.
- Don't skip breakfast – this is the most important meal of the day and will kick start your metabolism and energy levels for the day.



For more detailed information about Seasonal Affective Disorder and other Well-Being issues, visit the Corporate Well-Being website at: [well-being](#)

# Risky business

## Photo driving licences

### Did you know?

All photo driving licences must be renewed after 10 years – or else you run the risk of a £1,000 fine.

The first photo licences issued in 1998 are now up for renewal costing £17.50.



Old-style paper licences are not affected.

## Security marking vs breach of contract

It is always a good idea to security mark all valuable pieces of equipment. This is so that if stolen, and then recovered by the police, they can be returned and the police have evidence of wrongful possession. The type of marking should be permanent and obvious to be a deterrent to a thief.

Sometimes, however, IT suppliers state that if an item is permanently security

marked, this will invalidate their warranty or lease agreement. You then have a number of decisions to make.

- How likely is it that the equipment will go wrong, invoking the warranty or breaching the contract?
- If likely, should you be buying this type of equipment in the first place?
- Is the warranty actually of value?
- Is it more likely to get stolen than go wrong?
- Can you get similar equipment from somewhere else that will allow security marking?

If at the end of the day you have no choice and cannot mark the items, then at least note down the serial numbers, employ physical measures such as security cables or clamps, and keep the items in an alarmed area of your premises.

## Missing cats

Norwich Union claims data has revealed that claims involving stolen catalytic converters have increased by 500% in the last year. The 'cats' contain quantities of metals such as palladium, rhodium and platinum, all of



which have very high scrap values and which these days makes them desirable to a thief.

## And finally . . .

## The grate drain robbery

(what a headline!)

There seems no end to metal thefts and here's another type that is happening across the country.

Thieves are now taking drain covers! This not only leaves local councils with a bill to replace the covers but also creates a hazard to pedestrians and cyclists who are faced with unexpected large holes in pavements and roads. This is particularly dangerous as most of the thefts happen at night. If you are out at night, keep your wits about you!

According to the Local Government Association earlier this year, the bill for replacing the covers runs into several millions of pounds.