

Risk News

Issue 22

Raising awareness - lowering risk

June 2003

Organising events

A fete worse than . . .

The summer time is when many organisations hold fetes and outdoor events. Most of these will run with no problems at all and everyone will have a good time. However, injuries can occur. For example, each year over 200 children are admitted to hospital with injuries caused while using bouncy castles.



- Any organisations not covered by NCC's insurance should obtain their own liability cover. A minimum of £3 million is recommended. Failure to obtain suitable cover could result in the organisers being sued personally should a claim arise.

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To make sure that your event takes place safely and without incident, we have produced guidelines below and on page 8 to help you. The guide is really only common sense. By carrying out basic checks and procedures, your event will not only still be fun and a success, but also safer.

Insurance issues

- The County's public liability insurance covers any activity organised by employees on behalf of Norfolk County Council. This will include schools that insure with us and any other County establishments. Parent Teacher Associations, "Friends" of one of our establishments, or trustees, are **not** covered by our insurance.

Special features

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Produced by Norfolk's Risk Management Group, published by the DF.



Norfolk County Council
at your service

Comment

Welcome to the latest issue of Risk News.

We have taken a bit of a seasonal theme to this issue with articles about organising summer events, the risks of water and DIY/ gardening risks. We're not trying to spoil your fun or put a damper on activities; rather just to let you know what you can do to make sure that nothing untoward happens. The item on organising events is particularly important as the potential is often there for people to get injured at our events.

Also included with this issue is a short survey asking what you think of Risk News. It won't take long to fill in, so please take the time to complete it and let us have your comments.

If any of you wish to contribute an article to a future issue of Risk News, or can suggest topics that you would like to see featured, please contact any of those below.

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Plant care - inspection vs maintenance

Much confusion seems to have arisen recently regarding statutory inspections of certain types of plant and machinery.

Plant such as lifting equipment, local exhaust ventilation equipment, pressurised items (boilers, heating plant, hot water heaters, etc) and fume cupboards require a statutory inspection on a regular basis to ensure they are operating safely.

This is quite different, and in addition to, servicing and maintenance.

Maintenance will often be arranged by NPS and can be carried out by any number of contractors.

Statutory inspections have to be carried out by law in a prescribed way and can only be undertaken by suitably independent and qualified ("competent") professionals. It is like the difference between your car having a service and having an MOT.

Failure to have plant inspected properly can lead to enforcement notices from the HSE and possible prosecutions.

Ooops!!

Most accidents in NCC vehicles are caused by a lack of concentration. Here is a recent, somewhat blatant, example.

"When reversing out of my own drive at night I had forgotten that our other car was out – it is usually in the garage as soon as my wife gets home. I caught the parked car with the wing of the lease car."

Risk profiling – have your say

We are currently in the process of implementing the corporate risk strategy, a major element of which is to produce a “risk profile” of each department within NCC. We want to identify all the key risks that people perceive can affect service delivery, staff well-being, our assets, our reputation, etc. Once identified, plans will be drawn up to manage the risks, and these will be included in the service planning process. At the moment we are looking at Cultural Services, Social Services, Fire Service and Dept of Finance.

We are getting much of the information by interviews, questionnaires and workshops but clearly we can't talk to everyone. If any of you would like to contribute to this important piece of work, by giving us your opinions of the risks in your area of work or department, please get in touch. Comments please to claire.briers@norfolk.gov.uk

Kiln fire warning

A recent fire at Surlingham Primary school raised several concerns that other schools and premises with kilns need to be aware of.

The kiln had been switched on by the headteacher the previous evening and the school then locked up before he left. During the night, a neighbour reported flames coming through the single storey flat roof above the kiln and the fire service were called. Damage included smoke and water damage in several areas of the small school, significant fire damage to the roof and the school being closed for a week. Total costs will be about £25,000.

This was an incident waiting to happen. The electric kiln had been installed many years ago in a confined cupboard-type space with inadequate ventilation or air flow around it.

The kiln was in an unsuitable position.

Above the kiln, an electric extraction fan (also several years old) had been installed in the low ceiling to remove the heat through the ceiling and roof to the outside. The fan was on when the kiln was on.

The electric fan was not on NPS's maintenance schedule as they had not been informed of its existence. Kilns are not maintained by NPS as part of BMPP.



Over the years, the lack of ventilation meant that the fan had to work harder than it was designed for, leading to a gradual slowing down in performance and wear on its motor. The excessive heat also caused the roof timbers to become brittle and capable of igniting at lower than expected temperatures. What seems to have happened is that the motor in the fan stopped, leading to significant heat build up. This caused the roof timbers and the plastic casing of the fan to auto-ignite.

Any premises with kilns should check:

- There is adequate air flow and ventilation around the kiln,
- Heat extraction units and fans are inspected and maintained regularly
- The kilns are maintained regularly
- That the fan is adequate for the job

If you have concerns, contact Paul Commins, Education H&S, on Nch 223470 or your property adviser

Laptop risks

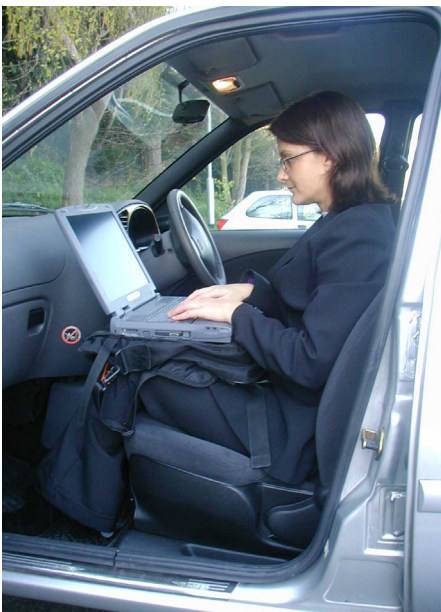
Laptop computers have freed us from our desks and enable us to travel and work almost anywhere.

But . . . studies have shown that as more and more time is spent using them, inevitable stress and strain related health problems can occur.



To avoid injury when using laptops,

- ◆ Try to use a docking station or attach a separate display and/or keyboard to a laptop if using it for any lengthy period of time.
- ◆ Try not to lean or bend to one side as this can put strain on your lower back.
- ◆ If you have screen glare move away to a spot where there is little reflection, and adjust your screen brightness. Try not to sit with your back to a window.
- ◆ Avoid sitting too high or too low to minimise the risk of strain injuries, particularly bending your wrists upwards and downwards when keying. Ensure your forearms are roughly horizontal. Use a height adjustable chair when available to achieve this.



- ◆ Always try to use a mouse or glide pad so that your hand is flat and fingers are relaxed.
 - ◆ Avoid using your laptop while sitting in the drivers seat of a car. If possible sit in the front passenger seat and push the seat back far enough to get as much space as possible.
 - ◆ Use a flat stable item such as the computer case to raise the laptop and improve your posture. It is recommended that a 1 – 2 minute break is taken in every 15 – 20 minutes.
 - ◆ When carrying try to avoid taking hard copies of documents that may already be stored on your laptop. Always try to use a carry case with a padded shoulder strap or use luggage that has wheels.
-
- ◆ Check laptop leads and plugs visually before you connect them and don't use them if they look worn or damaged.
 - ◆ Check that a portable appliance test is carried out annually.

Making crime (reduction) a habit

Have you ever noticed that almost everyone has a theory about crime – and what should be done (usually to offenders) to prevent it?

- ☹ These theories nearly always involve somebody else having to do something?
- ☹ Crime and crime prevention is always someone else's responsibility?

The short answer is that we all have a part to play both as individuals and as departments or agencies. On a personal basis we all do things to protect ourselves. By not leaving valuables on display in the car we are taking steps to prevent ourselves from becoming a victim. We are also not leading others into temptation. We may even look out for each other by challenging people who are acting suspiciously around our homes or our neighbours' property, or at work.

To have any crime you must have:

- a motivated offender, and
- a potential victim, and
- a location that is suitable for the crime to take place.

So, what is it about the physical environment that makes it susceptible to crime?

Who are the offenders – what are their reasons for committing the offence – how do they do it?

And finally the victims – why have they become a victim – what is it that makes them vulnerable?

By looking at solutions that impact on each of the victim, the offender and the location you are much more likely to prevent the crime happening again.

This comprehensive approach involves many more people playing a part and goes far beyond policing, which is after all, reactive. Far better to prevent crime in the first place, than relying on detection after the event.

Norfolk's approach

Within Norfolk there are 7 multi-agency Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. Each Partnership has identified priority areas and set challenging crime reduction targets. The County Council has a central role in each Partnership. It's an equal statutory partner with the Police and the District Council.

Each council also has a responsibility to make sure that it takes account of the crime and disorder implications of all its decisions. We need to make sure we think through the potential crime and disorder issues that could stem from our services. And indeed, be more proactive in identifying how we can have a positive impact on crime and disorder reduction.

NCC intends to work better with the 7 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships – there are opportunities for services to engage with these partnerships to mutual advantage; achieving better service objectives while also reducing crime and disorder.

What could the County Council do, what could you do, to make Norfolk a safer place? Before you blame the parents or lock them up and throw away the key – are you sure that you are doing your bit to break the habit?

For further information or ideas, don't hesitate to call Peter Burnham on 01603 224490 or Jon Shalom on 01603 222281.

Home Sweet Home – or is it?

Accident zone

If you think you are safer at home than at work you might be surprised to learn that more people are injured in their own home than anywhere else. The statistics for one year are:

	Killed	Injured
Home	4066	2.7 million
Work	376	1.5 million



Of all the accidents in the home:

- Slips, trips and falls account for over a third of all home accidents.
- Fire is one of the most serious hazards
- Activities such as food preparation, DIY, children playing and household repairs contribute a significant number.

DIY

At this time of year, many people get involved with decorating, DIY and working in the garden. These can be completely safe activities or quite dangerous ones, depending on how you go about it.



Each year about 100,000 people end up in casualty from DIY related accidents, mainly caused by either a lack of knowledge or carelessness. Recent studies have shown:

- 85% of people who use stepladders do not know that they are designed to be used square onto the wall, not parallel to it
- 72% of women had never heard of a residual current device
- Most men over-estimate their ability to do some tasks, but being stubborn will not be beaten by a job. In fact they need more knowledge, the right tools and some help.

Doing jobs at home can save money but may also have unexpected costs. Before you go ahead with the work ask yourself:

- Is this a job for an expert?
- Do I have the right tools and protective equipment?
- Do I really know what I'm doing?

If you do decide to take on a DIY project take your time and read any instructions that you have. Help yourself prevent accidents in your home.

Personal safety tips

Gardening tools

Keep tools with sharp edges out of the reach of children.

Keep your shed tidy, it will help you to reach tools easily.

Wear strong shoes or boots to protect your feet.

Hiring tools

Ask for the right equipment for the job

Ask how it works

Check it has been serviced and tested

Ensure you get the instructions

Check what protective equipment you need ie., goggles or masks and wear suitable clothing.

Gardening

Know your limitations.

Wear gloves to protect from cuts and abrasions, and avoid allergic reactions to certain plants

Consider putting rubber or plastic caps on the tops of canes and stakes to prevent poking yourself in the eye

Keep your tetanus inoculations up to date

Find out where underground pipes and cables are located, (before you cut through them!)

SNACK



Mains electrical works

Unless you are confident and know what you are doing, use an electrician

Drilling/Fixing

If drilling in or fixing to walls, check there are no electrical cables or wires present before you start

Using strimmers, trimmers and power tools

Invest in a residual current device. If a cable is cut or the tool malfunctions, the power supply to the equipment is cut off, before you are!

Be aware of other people coming near to where you are working.

Keep cables behind you while you work

Put equipment away as soon as you have finished using them.

Never adjust or check equipment while it is plugged in.

Don't use it in damp or wet conditions.

Ladders

Check for damage – splits, dents or cracks

The safest angle is to match every one measure out from the wall by four measures up

Make sure it's on firm ground and against a firm surface (not on the guttering or drain pipe).

Ensure its secured or held in place

Don't over-reach, move the ladder

Don't overload yourself or the ladder

Organising events (continued)

- All external suppliers to an event should have public liability insurance of at least £3m, as should anyone who is providing one of the attractions, such as equipment, vehicles or animals. The organisers need to check that the insurance is in place by seeing the certificate.
- Where equipment is hired in, such as a bouncy castle, the hirer's and manufacturer's instructions should be complied with. These will cover the number of people who can use it at any one time, any weight or height or age restrictions, the suitable inflation pressure, how to secure it to the ground, suitable footwear, etc.

Pre-event checks

- Before the event takes place, the organisers should check the grounds and facilities where the event will be held to make sure they are safe. Any holes should be filled in and any potential tripping or other hazards rectified.
- Undertake a risk assessment to take account of all the planned activities, including alternative activities or venues in the event of poor weather. The results of the assessment should be recorded.
- All electrical items with a plug attached must have a valid electrical safety test certificate.
- Any construction or scaffolding should be inspected prior to the event starting to ensure it is safe to use.
- Events where there is an obvious potential for injury, such as archery, go-karting, parachuting, microlite flying, etc, should be planned for in area of the grounds where they can be completely separated from the other events and members of the public.
- Supervision of attractions such as bouncy castles is important. A sloping safety apron or thick mats should be placed at all the possible landing areas and responsible adults stationed to help children getting on and off, and to prevent them bouncing off the open side. Supervisors need to have the authority to stop people from using the equipment if they are messing about.
- Other attractions need to have roped off or barriered areas to keep the public away from possible causes of harm.
- If the event includes a barbecue, make sure there is a bucket of sand or an extinguisher available, just in case the flames get out of control. Take the usual precautions when cooking food outdoors (see previous article in Risk News 18).
- It is always sensible to arrange for qualified first aid personnel to be available, to deal with any minor problems as they arise.
- Don't ignore the security of your buildings if the event is being held in your grounds. If the premises are open to let the public use the toilets and other facilities, ensure that access to other parts of the buildings is restricted.



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Organising events (continued)

On the day

- Be prepared to change how and where events are run if weather conditions mean that certain activities are no longer suitable.
- Appoint someone to be in overall charge so that they can deal with any problems or issues as they arise.
- In the unlikely event that someone does get injured, write down as many details as possible at the time, including names of any witnesses, for subsequent follow up and investigation.

Further advice on this is available from the Risk Management section at County Hall on 01603 224416 / 223843 or departmental health and safety officers.

Specific guidance on the use of bouncy castles is available from the HSE on www.hse.gov.uk.

New rules on asbestos

The biggest occupational health killer in the UK is asbestos-related disease. Of the 3,000 people currently dying each year from this, 25% have once worked in the building and maintenance trades. Often they would have worked unknowingly on or near to asbestos containing materials (ACMs).

While virtually all other activities involving potential exposure to asbestos have now ceased, evidence suggests that this vulnerable group is still at considerable risk from accidental exposure to asbestos.

Important new legislation to tackle this has now been introduced. The new Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 (CAWR) introduce an **explicit duty to manage** asbestos in non-domestic premises.

Duty to manage asbestos

This requires those in control of premises to:

- take reasonable steps to determine the location and condition of materials likely to contain asbestos
- assume materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not
- make and keep an up to date record of the location and condition of the ACMs or presumed ACMs in the premises
- assess the risk of the likelihood of anyone being exposed to fibres from these materials
- prepare a plan setting out how the risks from the materials are to be managed;
- put the plan into action
- review and monitor the plan periodically
- provide information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb them.

Corporate advice on how NCC intends to manage this duty will be issued shortly.

NCC reports on H&S

The Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy Statement was published by the DETR and Health and Safety Commission in June 2000.

It set out how the Government and the HSC intended to work together to revitalise health and safety; and to reduce injuries and ill health caused by work.

Part of the strategy noted that encouraging companies to report on health and safety performance would help achieve national health and safety targets.

We are now in the second year of producing an annual H&S report and action plan. In addition to the corporate report, all departments now produce an annual H&S report and action plan.

Some of the actions in this year's Corporate H&S action plan include:

- Follow up actions to the review of stress carried out last year (stress is NCC's biggest cause of sickness absence).
- A review of musculoskeletal issues (NCC's second largest cause of sickness absence).
- A review of our Occupational Health systems and strategies.
- A review all Corporate H&S guidance.

The final version of the annual H&S report will appear on the H&S pages of the HR@Norfolk intranet site.

Mardle not muddle?

County Hall staff may recall the loss of telephones last year when the building fell strangely silent for much of the afternoon. For some, this was not unwelcome!

However, as far as the public are concerned, silence is not golden – especially when they need to talk to us. Therefore the emergency switch in the basement has been extended and, in the event of a loss of telephones through a switch fault in the future, the lines will be re-routed through this switch.

Staff have been identified from each department to operate the telephone extensions in the emergency centre and messages will be passed to other staff via the e-mail system until the fault is repaired.

The paper plan will soon be published, at which time everyone will be informed of the procedure to follow in the event of a loss.

It's good to talk – honestly!

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).



Water risks

Every summer there are around 200 deaths caused by drowning, in swimming pools, rivers or at the seaside.



Spotting the dangers!

Being aware of a risk is the first stage to avoiding problems. By following some simple guidelines, everyone can have a fun time and return home safely.

- Rivers and seas may look calm on the surface, but underneath there can often be strong currents and undertows.
- Boats present a great danger to swimmers; they should be kept apart.
- The sea, rivers and lakes are much colder than swimming pools. This can greatly reduce the stamina of otherwise competent swimmers.
- Be aware that there can be submerged dangers at the seaside and in local rivers and lakes. This might be rocks or other obstructions in the sea, or thick weed in rivers that can trap the unwary swimmer.
- Don't swim soon after eating or after drinking alcohol.
- Swimming is not allowed in most rivers and lakes!!

However, there are some areas at the coast, rivers and lakes, where swimming is allowed. So if you are going to use the water, here are a few suggestions to keep you and your children safe.

At the coast

- Use beaches with lifeguards present, and become acquainted with the beach flag meanings.
- Check the weather and tides. In areas such as parts of the north Norfolk coast the tide can come in very fast, easily trapping unwary people on sandbanks.
- Ask local people where the safe swimming areas are.
- Tie inflatable beds and boats to the shore, to prevent them drifting out to sea.
- Make yourself aware of submerged rocks and breakwaters.
- Never go alone.

On rivers and lakes

- Take notice of any signs nearby.
- Ask someone about dangers in the area.
- Always enter the water feet first-no diving! If you can't see the bottom of the river, remember there may hidden hazards.
- The bases of rivers and lakes can have a deep layer of mud or silt, making the actual depth much greater than it looks.
- If hiring a boat, wear the life jackets.

Remember if an accident does occur, know how to deal with it.
Phone the relevant emergency service, give first aid and stay calm.

For further information check out www.rospea.com

Risky business

Take a break!

The holidays are coming! This can mean longer hours sat at the wheel of your car, going to your holiday destination or the airport, . . . but will you arrive in one piece?



Research has shown that 20% of road traffic accidents are caused by tiredness.

Also, tiredness is no longer a valid excuse in the event of killing or injuring another road user in an accident.

Remember,

- Never start a journey if you feel tired
- Avoid long trips between midnight and 6am
- Stop for 20 minute breaks every 2 hours
- Drink coffee or a strong caffeine drink
- If you feel sleepy, STOP!



These do **not** work,

- Turning up the radio
- Stopping for a quick walk
- Opening the window

Aware of awareness

The Health and Safety Awareness Courses for Managers and Supervisors, available through Corporate Training and Development (CTD), are currently undergoing an overall.

The refreshed course will focus less on the detail of legislative requirements and spend more time on the basic skills needed to effectively manage H&S.

Two other improvements; the course is now just one day long, and even better, it is completely free of charge to all managers and supervisors in NCC!

For more information contact CTD on 01603 223414.

Child casualty rates

Norfolk children are twice as likely to be injured in a car than those in the rest of the country.

Road-related casualties for children in the UK show that about 25% of them are hurt in a vehicle, with the rest being injured while walking or cycling. In Norfolk this is more like 50%.

This is thought to be due to:

- a greater use of cars than in others part of the UK,



- a general lack of concentration while on familiar journeys, such as school runs,
- a higher than average failure to wear seatbelts

Hot dogs

Don't forget – animals must not be left in vehicles without ventilation.

Cars parked in the sun heat up very quickly and any animals inside will soon get overheated and suffer.

And finally . . .

More thoughts from David Brent

"Those of you who think you know everything are annoying to those of us who do."

"If you treat the people around you with love and respect, they will never suspect you're trying to get them sacked."

"If your boss is getting you down, look at him through the prongs of a fork and imagine him in jail."

Reader survey

To enable us to provide you with the information and assistance that you need to manage your risks, it is important that **Risk News** continues to meet your requirements. We therefore wish to find out what you think about it. We are very grateful for the regular feedback we already get from some of you out there. However, we would also like the opinions of our other readers.

Be honest. We need your views to help us improve future issues and to provide you with a publication that you want. Please tick the relevant boxes and return the survey in the internal mail. If you receive this in electronic format, please email it back to claire.briers@norfolk.gov.uk

1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = good, 4 = very good

How do you rate:-

1

2

3

4

(please tick)

the layout and style of the publication?

☐☐☐☐

the readability and length of the articles?

☐☐☐☐

the interest of the subjects mentioned?

☐☐☐☐

the usefulness/relevance of the items?

☐☐☐☐

If you would like any additional copies of **Risk News**,
please indicate the number required

Please use this box for any other comments, such as other improvements or additional articles you would like to see in future

Please make the effort to return this survey. You can, of course, remain anonymous if you wish. However, if you want extra copies, we do need to know where to send them.

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Thank you

fold here-----

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RISK AND INSURANCE SECTION
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