

# RISK News

Issue 39

July 2009

## Summer storms

**In the last three years we have suffered 79 incidents of storm water damage to our premises during the summer months costing nearly £230,000. The majority of these arose at schools.**

Summer storms can often involve very heavy rain over a relatively short time, leading to flash flooding. This in turn can cause drains and drainpipes to back up, gulleys to overflow and water to flow into buildings. Likely changes to our climate in the future will only make this worse.

### So what can you do?

**All premises managers, but especially those at schools that will be shut during the summer holidays, should carry out these basic checks.**

- Ensure all external drains and surface water gulleys are clear of debris, silt, etc and flowing freely.
- Check that all downpipes and gutters are also clear.
- If there are doors where water has flooded under before, consider putting down sandbags outside if no-one is likely to be in the building.
- If you have flood boards, put them in place before the school breaks up and leave them there all summer if the particular doors will not need to be used.
- If basements or other rooms are vulnerable, do not store anything valuable on the floor. Remove such items to another higher part of the building or if not possible, store the items in place but on racking, pallets or some other means of raising them off the floor. We recommend a minimum of 300mm from the floor.
- Some of our newer or recently refurbished premises now have rain-sensitive louvered windows in roofs. Please check they operate properly and close when required.



ORIGINAL IMAGE FROM EDP

**If you are unfortunate enough to still experience a flood, make early contact with the Insurance section at County Hall on 01603 222839 or out of hours on 07867 810571 or 07786 171033.**

Produced by the Risk Management section of Corporate Finance



**Norfolk** County Council

# Comment

Welcome to the latest issue of Risk News.

Our main feature this time concerns the less well publicised subject of men's health. It seems men as a breed, when compared to their female counterparts, are more reluctant to seek help from the health professionals, with the result that certain diseases can be at a more advanced stage when finally discovered. This is putting men's health at risk.

While we boys don't want to be seen as snivelling, whinging, hypochondriacs we clearly have to overcome the barriers that are stopping us looking after our health.

On a cheerier note, the Safe Driver of the Year competition is being held again this year. We had a good take up last year and are looking for even more entrants this year. If you fancy your chances, or several of you from one section want to compete against each other via the competition, then have a go and register you details.

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

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# Car selling scam

**Norfolk Trading Standards recently warned about a scam that is costing UK consumers nearly £3m each year.**

People selling vehicles on web sites or through magazines are cold-called and promised that they can be matched with a buyer. All they have to do is pay a fee of typically £80 to £99 to access this matching service. Once they pay the money they rarely hear any more and the money is lost.

David Collinson, Head of Norfolk County Council Trading Standards, said: "Vehicle matching scamming is a big industry across the country. While we are not aware of a current problem in Norfolk, we want people to be aware of this scam and how it operates before they fall prey to it. With more people experiencing financial difficulties at the moment, we are concerned that a greater number of people will be vulnerable to the high-pressure tactics employed by these scamsters.

## 1998 FIAT PUNTO 60 SX 5dr Hatchback £545

Contact  
number:  
 01502  
512\*\*\*  
or 07769  
862\*\*\*



"If in any doubt about a deal that is being offered to you – especially if it sounds too good to be true – do not agree to anything and take time to consider the potential risks. If you think you have been a victim of a scam or suspect a scam, contact the local Norfolk Trading Standards service on 08454 04 05 06 and report it."

# Safe Driver of the Year

## Are you a skilled, safe driver – and can you prove it?

**Following the success of last year's competition we are running it again this year. As before, the competition is open to all employees of Norfolk County Council.**

Tony Palmer, last year's Safe Driver of the Year, said "I enjoyed taking part last time and would encourage anyone to have a go this year."

The competition will be in 3 stages

- A test on the current highway code
- A practical manoeuvring session
- A driving session

After the first stage the highest scoring drivers will be contacted to arrange the manoeuvring session - this will take place locally. The highest scoring drivers from this session will then carry out a short driving session observed by an officer of the County Council's Road Safety Team.

The winner will receive a trophy recognising their achievement and will also be able to choose a suitable driving experience as a prize. So if you have ever fancied driving a tank or taking a 4x4 off-road enter yourself now.

The practical manoeuvring session and the driving session will take place in a car supplied by Road Safety to ensure fairness to all drivers. This will take account of any specific needs of the drivers taking part.



To register your interest in taking part please email [angela.freeman2@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:angela.freeman2@norfolk.gov.uk) with Safe Driver in the subject box and she will send you full details and an application form.

If you have any questions please contact Angela on 01603 638138 or Road Safety on 01603 638121.



# Successes in Court

We have had a few more cases in Court since the last issue. We have had several claims from claimants falling over or into alleged potholes on the footpath or the highway. We are pleased to say that we have successfully defended all these cases and any pothole has not been found by the Court to be dangerous. ***So the moral is - watch where you are walking!***

On a more serious note, we had another reminder in a case about the importance of carrying out regular risk assessments. In this case the claimant slipped over on some food in a room. The Judge concluded that the hazard had been created by the claimant. However he went on to stress the importance of carrying out regular and thorough risk assessments, in this case on the condition of the floor. He also stressed that staff should be competent to carry out the risk assessments and that it was important to keep copies of these.

If you are responsible for ensuring that your staff carry out risk assessments, then please ensure that they are competent to do so. They should receive appropriate training if needed, the assessments should be carried out when required and copies should be kept.

## Care provider fined for fire safety breaches

**A Healthcare company that runs care homes in Surrey has been fined £80,000 and told to pay costs of £20,000 after breaching fire safety standards.**

Surrey Fire Service brought the prosecution under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 following a fire in a boiler room at one of the homes.

Investigations found the fire started as a result of accumulated general rubbish and storage in the boiler room over a period of time. Staff had not been instructed in the findings of the fire risk assessment, which had identified the boiler room as a high risk area that must not be used for storage. Also there was no adequate system for reviewing fire safety arrangements in the home.



**Recent surveys of NCC premises, including schools, show that these circumstances could just as easily happen in some of our premises and it would then be us facing the fines and prosecutions.**

Not only do fire risk assessments need to be carried out thoroughly, but their findings should be communicated to staff. Changes to procedures and practices need to be made if the fire risk assessment has identified them and regular checks should be carried out to ensure correct implementation.

Any manager that needs further advice should contact their departmental safety adviser.

# Fraud and corruption

Norfolk County Council has had an Anti-Fraud and Corruption strategy for some time now but recent changes in legislation and external guidance have caused it to be strengthened and revised.

Fraud or corruption is a rare event in local government, and extremely rare within Norfolk County Council, but if it does happen it is very high profile. Not surprising really as we are dealing with public money.

Therefore the standards of governance that we operate to must be the highest and at least meet the relevant guidelines from our internal and external auditors. There is also legislation, such as the Fraud Act 2006, that must be complied with.



Our revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy was launched on 30 June and is available on the intranet at <http://intranet/dfi/NCCAntiFraud&CorruptionStrategy.pdf>. A series of briefings are currently going on for managers so they can understand their responsibilities. Any manager who has not yet booked for a briefing should contact Adrian Thompson (details below).

**The strategy is built on seven concepts:**

- **Culture**
- **Deterrence**
- **Prevention**
- **Detection**
- **Investigation**
- **Sanctions**
- **Redress**

Managers will have a key role in promoting the strategy, including maintaining a culture of trust and honesty, coupled with good controls to provide deterrence, prevention and detection. There is also a documented prosecution policy within the strategy.

However it's not just managers who need to know about the new strategy. All staff have a responsibility to ensure fraud or corruption does not happen. They must be able to raise in confidence any concerns they have to their line manager in the first instance, or their departmental finance officer or chief officer if this is more appropriate.

If you need further information, contact Adrian Thompson, Chief Internal Auditor on 01603 222777 or [adrian.thompson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:adrian.thompson@norfolk.gov.uk)

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.



# Men's health

In case you missed it, 15 – 21 June was National Men's Health Week. This important initiative was promoted by our Well-Being team.

**Men are:**

## More likely to:

- smoke
- be overweight
- drink too much alcohol
- use illegal drugs
- go in the sun without using sun screen or covering up

## More likely to die from:

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- HIV
- Accidents
- Suicide

## And yet:

Men are LESS likely to seek help or visit their GP or dentist

This year, the theme of Men's Health Week was 'Access to Services'. One of the biggest risks to men's health is their reluctance to seek help from services such as the GP or pharmacist, and this has a direct impact on their health and well-being. For instance, although more women than men develop the cancer malignant melanoma, more men than women die from it, almost certainly because men take longer to present it to their GPs.

**You can significantly improve your chances of a longer, healthier, and quite possibly happier life. Some of the key messages are:**

## Ball games – check your own!

Check regularly for lumps and bumps. Testicular cancer is the most common cancer among young men. But if you catch it early, it can be cured. It doesn't take long and it could save your life. Go to the NHS website for tips on how to check yourself: <http://www.nhs.uk/>



## Mind your back!

2 out of 5 men suffer from back pain. Learn how to lift safely, always bending at the knees and keeping the back straight.

If you are experiencing back pain, or any other form of musculoskeletal problems, refer to the Musculoskeletal Injury Rehabilitation Scheme (MIRS) for assessment and treatment.

For further guidance around manual handling, view the HR website on the Intranet.



## Up in smoke!

Apart from all the well known diseases and problems that smoking can cause, did you know that it also reduces blood flow, which can result in impotence? (Maybe this should be 'Down in smoke!').

If you want help to give up smoking, please visit the Cignificant website - [www.cignificant.co.uk](http://www.cignificant.co.uk)



## Food for thought

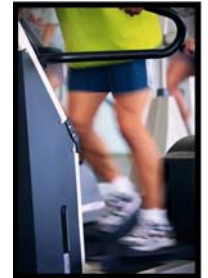
- Limit fast food to reduce the risk of heart disease.
- Eat less salt to reduce the risk of high blood pressure.
- Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day to reduce the risk of some cancers, such as stomach, pancreas and colon.

We all know the advice, but do we act on it? For practical easy recipes and further information, contact the Well-Being team, or go to the Food Standards Agency website – [www.food.gov.uk/men](http://www.food.gov.uk/men)



## Be active

You don't have to exercise really hard to make a big difference to your health. Just aim to do enough to raise your breathing rate, for 30 minutes 5 times a week. A mile of brisk walking will burn the same calories as a mile of running. Why not head to the coast and make the most of your local, free facilities? To find out about physical activities, classes or clubs near you, visit the Active Norfolk website – <http://www.activenorfolk.org/> or contact Adult Education on 0344 800 8002.



## See your doctor/dentist

The longer that problems go undetected or untreated, the worse they can become.

Get yourself registered with a GP and a Dentist. Then use them!



## Danger - Hazardous Waist!

Measure your waist just below the belly button. (Note - this is not the same as your trouser waist size). If it's over 37"/94cm, or over half your height, your health may be at increased risk. Men are more prone to carry the extra weight in the abdominal area (also known as central obesity), commonly referred to as an 'apple' shape. Carrying excess weight in the stomach area increases your risk of developing heart disease and diabetes.



## A problem shared....

It's important to talk to someone if you have any concerns at all, from debt/legal issues or substance misuse, to health concerns or bereavement.

- Talk to your line manager to look at how they may be able to support you during a difficult time.
- Talk to your colleagues, friends and family.
- Talk to your GP.
- Speak to, or meet with, a counsellor from Norfolk Support Line. It's completely free and confidential. 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call 0800 169 7676.
- Contact a member of the Well-Being team – [www.norfolk.gov.uk/cex/wellbeing](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/cex/wellbeing) or call 01603 223763 (Adult Social Services), 01603 224293 (Corporate), or 01603 222326 (Children's Services)



# Recent Legal cases

## What is Work Equipment?

Recent decisions from the courts have been extending the definition of what is work equipment and hence what an employer can be liable for in the event that an employee becomes injured by the equipment. Under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 ('PUWER') the basic presumption is that if the employee is injured by the equipment, then the employer is liable unless it can be proved otherwise. It's not a question of negligence, but rather an absolute duty to prevent injuries.

The latest case, which was decided by the House of Lords in May, has reigned in the scope of 'equipment'.

A council care worker in Northamptonshire injured herself after the edge of a wooden ramp gave way as she was wheeling a client out of her house. The ramp was owned and installed by the NHS. The court held that as the council did not have control over the ramp, it could not be classed as work equipment, even though it had been the subject of a risk assessment.

## Hands-free phone kits

The law states it is a specific offence to use a hand-held phone, or similar device, when driving. If caught, a driver will automatically have their license endorsed with three penalty points and will receive a £60 fine or up to £1,000 on conviction in court (£2,500 for drivers of goods vehicles, buses or coaches).



While it is not illegal to use a hands-free phone while driving, the Highway Code specifically warns drivers that they **MUST** be in proper control of their vehicles at all times, and strongly advises drivers not to use mobile phones (and other equipment) while driving. Drivers are still at risk of prosecution (for failure to have proper control) if they use hands-free phones when driving.

Managers must carry out a risk assessment before a hands-free kit is supplied to one of our drivers. The presumption should be that calls do not need to be taken or made while driving. Only where there is an overriding business need should the assessment then be carried out.

It should consider what types of calls an individual should be expected to receive or make while driving. Information / discussion or decision / confrontational? It should also consider what the impact would be on not immediately receiving or making a phone call while driving. Would a messaging service be better? Safety considerations must take preference over business issues.

Further advice can be obtained from departmental Health & Safety Advisers.



# Health & Safety Message of the month

## Have you seen this yet?

It's a bite sized message, about topical health and safety issues, that comes out each month – hence the clever title. The information is on the HR@Norfolk part of the intranet under Health & Safety.

It is designed to help keep managers and other staff up to date and managers are encouraged to include it as a standing item on team meeting agendas. Topics are varied and could be about fire safety, or workstation set up, or anything else. One topic mentioned recently is to do with unsafe storage in our buildings – see below.

## Behind closed doors

Inspection surveys have been carried out in County Hall recently looking at some of the storage areas. The findings were not good and premises managers of other buildings would be well advised to check their own sites for similar items.

### Findings included:

- Gangways blocked with boxes of items
- Many heavy items stored on top shelves meaning people would be more at risk of injury trying to retrieve them
- Shelving that had buckled under the weight of the items on it, making it unstable
- Emergency exits blocked
- A toaster plugged into the wall with damaged flex and clear signs of scorching
- Cigarette butts inside a paper store
- Storage up to ceilings, blocking smoke detectors and creating fire hazards by being too close to lights



These storage areas tend to be accessed infrequently and then often only by one person at a time. If they are hazardous to enter then the person is clearly at greater risk of injury. Also, if they were injured, how long would it be before someone came to their assistance?

If you are responsible for any such storage areas, make sure they are properly organised, safe to enter and that suitable procedures have been worked out for when your staff will be working in them.



# Countywide Physical Activity

## - survey results

Following on from the pilot survey carried out at County Hall recently, a further survey was carried out across the whole of the Council. Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our survey. We had almost 1300 responses! These have helped us to identify current activity levels among employees at NCC, as well as how we can help to improve opportunities for staff.



Congratulations to Simon Turner from P&T's Ketteringham depot, winner of the prize draw, who has received two day passes to a leisure centre of his choice.

### Summary of results

- **65%** of respondents exercise for at least 30 minutes on 3 or more days a week, enough to raise their breathing rate, while **a third** do so on 5 or more days a week.
- **56%** of those who exercise 3 or more days a week do so purely for recreational purposes.
- **45%** of those who exercise 5 or more days a week do so purely for recreational purposes.
- **25%** of respondents exercise on 3 or more days a week through getting to and from work.
- Of those respondents who are not currently regularly physically active, only **1.7%** state they are not interested in becoming so. The remainder say that they are thinking about becoming more regularly physically active and/or they are intending to change their behaviour to become so.
- **65%** of respondents state that time constraints are a major barrier to them pursuing a more active lifestyle, while **42%** say that work commitments also present a barrier. Almost **20%** also say that the distance to leisure facilities can put them off.
- **Two thirds** of respondents would like to see opportunities available to them near to their workplace after work, while a third also say they would like opportunities at lunchtime.

Below is the breakdown of the most frequently requested activities that people would like to see:

Type of Activity	No. of People
Walking Group	362
Pilates	360
Yoga	346
Dance	335
Aerobics	266

Over **three quarters** of respondents say they would be happy to pay if these opportunities were made available near to their place of work.

The results of this survey clearly show that while a good percentage of employees are already regularly physically active, the large majority would like more opportunities to help them become more regularly physically active, and to overcome some of the barriers outlined above. In addition, employees have many good suggestions for what can be done.



## In response to the survey results:

- The top suggestion for the type of activity that employees would like to see available is 'walking groups'. This is excellent to hear as it is easy to set up, flexible and of course free. Walking groups have already been set up in a number of workplaces across the county, and we will be publicising details of these groups on the Well-Being website on the Intranet.
- Adult Education will be arranging a number of free taster sessions at a number of venues across the County. In response to the survey, sessions will be arranged for Yoga, Pilates and Aerobics, at King's Lynn, Sprowston, Great Yarmouth, North Walsham and Attleborough. These will be taking place in Autumn '09.
- Depending on the level of interest in the taster sessions, Adult Education will arrange ongoing courses in the most popular activities. Those who provided contact details in the survey will be given priority in booking on to the sessions.
- Team-based well-being facilitators will be trained on how to encourage physical activity within their teams, and will be supported in helping to arrange opportunities for physical activity within their workplaces, for instance setting up a walking or a cycling group.
- Facilitators will also be provided with well-being newsletters to distribute within their teams, which will include information about other opportunities available to employees, as well as ideas for activities in the workplace, how to overcome time and money constraints, etc.
- The Well-Being team will be working with Active Norfolk, Adult Education, and other departments in NCC such as the Health Walks Project Team, to raise awareness of physical activity and to continue to increase levels of physical activity among our employees.



## Dates for your diaries

Some Health and Well-Being awareness days are planned for later in the year.

**September 30 - King's Lynn; October 7 - Gt Yarmouth; October 14 - North Walsham; November 5 - County Hall**

Contact the Well-Being team for more details [www.norfolk.gov.uk/cex/wellbeing](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/cex/wellbeing)

# Risky business

## Let us know

If you hire a vehicle for work, even for just a day, you **must** inform the Insurance section. Otherwise it will not be insured and you will be driving illegally.

Please email [angela.freeman2@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:angela.freeman2@norfolk.gov.uk) with the following:

- Dates on and off hire
- Registration number
- Type, make and model of vehicle

## Partnerships

- **Is your service in a partnership with others?**
- **Are you responsible for managing a partnership?**
- **Are you considering developing a partnership to deliver services?**



Then you need to know that there is now comprehensive guidance on partnership working on the intranet at <http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/cex/Policy/partnerships/partnerships.htm>

This sets out guidelines for good governance in partnerships, what you should consider to manage the risks appropriately, various health-check tools and templates to allow you to demonstrate that the partnership is being managed appropriately.

The guidance distinguishes between small/simple partnerships and the larger/more complex ones with the simple ones only requiring a light touch. Those that are more complex will need greater governance and management to ensure they are properly controlled and achieve their objectives.

## Driver study

A recent survey by insurer Esure has warned that listening to live football matches on the radio while driving can cause serious distractions and lead to accidents.

The study claims that an estimated two million motorists have had an accident or a near miss while driving and listening to sport.

The driving behaviour of football fans was also more aggressive and erratic than casual listeners. At times of key moments in the games, the supporter drives more quickly, less courteously and less safely than the casual listener.



Although not mentioned in the study, Norwich City fans are thought to show a different response.

Some just fall asleep while others experience a slowly enveloping sense of gloom and depression when listening to their team 'performing'.

## And finally . . .

### One for The Darwin awards?

Two unfortunate burglars from the Midlands recently came to an untimely end when they broke into a disused electricity sub-station to steal copper cabling.

While going about their business they somehow triggered the fire suppression system. This flooded the room with carbon dioxide in a couple of seconds and, sadly for them, they were asphyxiated.

One moment shuffling around a copper coil, the next shuffling off their mortal coil.