

# RISK News

Issue 40

September 2009

## Adapting to climate change - what Norfolk is doing

**There is now widespread scientific consensus that accelerated climate change is happening and that human activities are the principal cause.**

Every region, local authority and individual are likely to be affected by climate change. Norfolk is low lying and flat and has an extensive coastline, which makes it particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Historically high spring tides combined with strong north westerly winds have caused a number of tidal surges with devastating results for local communities, in particular coastal communities and the Broads area.



### The future

The climate in Norfolk is expected to change significantly over the next century, with average temperatures expected to rise by up to 5 degrees centigrade by 2080.

The specific changes that we are likely to see in Norfolk can be summarised as:

- Wetter winters, leading to increased flood risk
- Hotter drier summers, leading to water scarcity, drought, increase in fires and extra pressure placed on wildlife
- Rising sea levels, leading to increased coastal erosion and a greater risk of coastal flooding; and
- More frequent extreme weather events, such as heat waves, gales, storms, tidal surges and intense rainfall.

**So what is Norfolk doing? - find out on page 6**

Produced by the Risk Management section of Corporate Finance



**Norfolk** County Council

# Comment

Welcome to the latest issue of Risk News.

Our lead article this time looks at how Norfolk is responding to climate change. This important subject is one that cannot be effectively tackled by any organisation in isolation and a partnership approach is the only way forward.

By getting everyone onboard and working towards common goals the risks from climate change are more likely to be managed. Also, the benefits are more likely to be realised. We will report on progress in future issues as well as what we and others are doing to reduce carbon emissions.

We also help to promote two health campaigns coming up. Breast cancer awareness and the link between alcohol and sexual health are perhaps subjects we don't usually feature here. However, what could be more important than risks to your own health?

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

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### Production of Risk News

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# Attention all lease car drivers

**To combat uninsured driving the Motor Insurers Database (MID) has been set up to record the details of all insured vehicles in the UK.**

For private individuals it's the responsibility of their insurance provider to get details of a policy or changes on the MID within seven days of the effective date. For company vehicles it's the responsibility of the policy holder to ensure that their company vehicle details are provided for the MID. For NCC insured vehicles this process is handled by the Risk & Insurance section.

For this reason, it is **essential** that as a lease car driver, you notify your Fleet Manager of any changes to your vehicle details, such as when your vehicle goes in for service / repair and the garage loans you a car to be covered by NCC's insurance. This should be done as soon as you know the registration number of the new vehicle. Your Fleet Manager then informs the Risk and Insurance section of the changes.



Data from the MID is used by police to help combat uninsured driving. They now utilise ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) technology to perform instant checks on vehicles to determine if they have valid insurance cover.

**If your details haven't been entered on the MID you may be stopped by the police. There's a risk that your vehicle could be seized if the correct details haven't been registered.**

# Swine flu

## Advice and guidance

Swine flu, or Influenza A H1N1 to give its official title, has been big news. Thankfully the illness, and the impact on society, has so far not been as great as feared, and the number of reported cases is reducing each week. However, the normal pattern of pandemics involves a second wave of infections which is predicted to occur in winter.



Reducing your risk of catching any infectious disease, or of passing it on, is simple:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
- Clean surfaces regularly to get rid of germs. Normal detergent and water is fine
- Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and place used tissues in a bin as soon as possible. **Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.**

To get the latest information for managers and employees, go to [www.peoplenet.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.peoplenet.norfolk.gov.uk) and put “swine flu” in the search. The front page of NCC’s intranet also has links to the FAQs and NHS Norfolk.

## School travel insurance policy – changes from 1 September 2009

As part of the support to schools during the current pandemic we have introduced some additional cover and clarifications to our travel insurance policy. This will assist schools in carrying out risk assessment and business continuity work associated with the pandemic.

### Key points

- There will be no restrictions of the existing cover as a result of swine flu
- Cover will be extended, for overseas trips only, to provide 50% reimbursement of cancellation costs where the cancellation is due to a lack of healthy supervisors or insufficient healthy pupils, as long as the trip had been booked before 1 September 2009 and the details were entered onto Evolve before 30 September 2009. This would normally be uninsured

Full details are on the Norfolk Schools internet site under ‘Hot Topics’.

## Perspective

Now that people are, in effect, self diagnosing their own swine flu by ringing the flu line or going on the website and giving the “right” answers, the system for handing out Tamiflu or other anti-virals is in full swing. However, tests have shown that only about 5 - 10% of the people **actually** have the disease.

# Employers duty to provide a safe system of work

## Ammah v Kuehne & Nagel Logistics Ltd (2009)

The claimant was employed by the company in the despatch department, where it was his job to get items off the shelves. Most of the shelves were approximately 6ft off the floor, with the result that items on them could be reached without difficulty. However some were higher than this. When the claimant was attempting to collect a leaflet from a higher shelf just out of reach, he turned a tote box upside down and stood on it to gain access to the upper shelf.

He was reaching the shelf when the box moved under him and he fell, breaking his ankle. He claimed for negligence and breach of statutory duty.

The Judge held that the accident was **not** caused by any breach of duty on the part of the employer. Some dangers were so obvious that no instruction was required, although that could not be said in relation to the risk in this case. A warning or instruction was required even though it was very rare for an employee to stand on a box. It was held that a general instruction not to use equipment for anything other than its intended use was clearly insufficient.

However in this case the claimant admitted that staff had been instructed that in order to access shelves out of their reach they should use a “man-riser”, portable steps or a forklift truck and that they should not stand on a box.

The employer had complied with its duty of care to ensure a safe system of work in relation to access to the upper shelves.



Not only was suitable equipment available, but employees were instructed to use that equipment and not to stand on boxes for the purpose. The risk associated with standing on a box had been identified, but had been adequately guarded against by the instruction given. In standing on a box, the claimant took a risk for which only he was to blame and there was no basis for holding the employer liable.

## Comment

The clear message here is that not only should suitable equipment be provided but also that proper instructions need to be given as well. This will help to reduce accidents.

**This should be borne in mind when staff in our premises are working above normal reachable heights, such as putting up Christmas decorations, when it is very easy to use a chair or a desk instead of the right equipment.**



# Expect Respect

There are over 900 incidents of violence or abusive behaviour affecting Norfolk County Council employees each year. More than 600 of these involve physical violence.

To support the County Council's violence against staff policy, some new awareness posters are now available. These highlight the behaviours that customers can expect when they are with us and what we expect from them in return, which includes the right to work in a safe environment, with mutual politeness and respect.

Many of our reception points will be sent a copy of the poster to display. If you do not receive a poster and would like one, you should contact your health and safety adviser.



## Health and Safety Policies and Procedures have a new home

In July the Council launched its new HR website, [www.peoplenet.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.peoplenet.norfolk.gov.uk)

PeopleNet has been developed in consultation with employees and managers across the County Council to enable you to get answers to your HR questions direct from the site. Staff can access the site from home or the library, as well as from their office pc.

The new site is the home for all the corporate health, safety and well-being policies and procedures. It has been designed to be customer-focused with frequently asked questions available on most subjects.

Over the next year many of the procedures will be refreshed and reformatted to ensure they fit the site design principles, and we will be continuing to add more information to the site. There is a 'contact us' section on the site where you can give feedback and suggestions to help us do this.

**Please note if you work in a school you should still use the Norfolk Schools site to access your health and safety guidance.**

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.



# Adapting to climate change - what Norfolk is doing

*continued from page 1 . . .*

There already exists a climate change strategy for Norfolk called 'Tomorrow's Norfolk, Today's Challenge'. This was launched in February 2009 and is endorsed by all eight local authorities in Norfolk. It can be found on the NCC internet at [http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/consumption/ldcplg?ldcService=SS\\_GET\\_PAGE&nodeId=3727](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/consumption/ldcplg?ldcService=SS_GET_PAGE&nodeId=3727)

## Impact profile

Under this overall strategy Norfolk County Council has analysed the impacts of climate change within its boundaries by producing a Local Climate Impact Profile (LCLIP) that covers both county and district services. This project was funded through the County Strategic Partnership and delivered in conjunction with Norfolk District Councils as part of the partnership within the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

The impetus for the LCLIP was the high level of awareness of Norfolk's particular vulnerability to weather events such as flooding and drought. The LCLIP found that Norfolk has been affected by at least forty significant weather events in the past eight years, with varying levels of severity and impacts for local authorities, communities and the environment.

Heavy rainfall and localised flooding are the most frequent events to impact Norfolk, closely followed by windstorms and snow. Over seventy villages were reported to have experienced flooding during the study period. Many communities experienced repeat incidences of flooding, such as Great Yarmouth, which flooded four times in 2006.

Flooded communities are likely to suffer substantial psychological and economic trauma and those that are repeatedly flooded often complain both to and about their council.



**THE WHITE SWAN, GREAT YARMOUTH**

In addition, severe weather can impact council services in various ways.

Fallen trees and debris frequently cause disruptions to the county's road network. This not only affects direct road users, but services that rely on transportation, such as primary care workers visiting vulnerable clients or the thousands of council staff who travel to schools and offices everyday.

## The financial cost

Unexpected extremes of weather, such as periods of hot weather and windstorms, can lead to unforeseen costs for councils. Budgets can become stretched as well, leading to burgeoning workloads, delayed programmes of work and increased pressures on staff.

The flooding from the East Coast Storm Surge during November 8-9 2007 accumulated costs of up to £170,000 for Norfolk County Council. Great Yarmouth Borough Council incurred costs of upwards of £53,000 and North Norfolk District Council quoted damages of £289,264 to property.

Additionally, over the last eight years over £1 million of insurance claims were paid by the County Council for damage to our property from storms alone.

The total cost of a severe weather event on the county can only ever be estimated but would be considerably more than the figures above once the cost of disruption, such as a closed school, is taken into account.



**BLACKFRIARS ROAD, GREAT YARMOUTH**

Alongside the impacts from unexpected events, weather events also have repetitive impacts on local authority assets and services, such as road networks and building maintenance. These impacts have a dual cost in terms of resources and labour hours that largely go unaccounted for, as they are a part of routine work. Such impacts will likely be augmented by predicted increases in intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and other climatic changes but are presently not formally considered.

## What next?

- The new Norfolk Climate Change Partnership is to be launched in October 2009 with responsibility for delivering the Climate Change Strategy for Norfolk
- A Norfolk Adaptation Group will be established as part of the Partnership, meeting for the first time at an "Adapting to Climate Change in Norfolk" conference on 13 October. It will work closely with Norfolk Resilience Forum
- A comprehensive risk assessment for Norfolk will be prepared, identifying the vulnerabilities to and opportunities from climate change for each sector
- This will be used to develop a detailed Norfolk Adaptation Plan during 2010
- The Adaptation Plan actions will be embedded in the strategies and plans of all council services and delivery partners

This will ensure we meet Level 2 of National Indicator 188 on planning to adapt to climate change by April 2010, and Level 3 by April 2011. More importantly, all the key partners will be working towards ensuring Norfolk is adapting for climatic changes and planning to make the most of the opportunities that will arise. We will report further in future issues.

***continued on page 8 . . .***

# Adapting to climate change - what Norfolk is doing

continued from page 7 . . .

## What departments can do in the meantime

- Services should plan more actively for future weather events
- Make better use of local knowledge about vulnerability in order to enhance resilience to future extreme weather events.
- Weather and climate change risks should be incorporated into existing asset management plans and added to group, department, corporate and project risk registers where significant and relevant.
- All section business contingency plans should consider the impacts of large scale and unpredicted weather events, such as windstorms, heavy rainfall, heat waves, drought and snow/ice.



**STORM DAMAGE AT NEATHERD HIGH, DEREHAM**

If you would like further information on this or feel that you can contribute to development in this area please contact Esme Holtom [esme.holtom@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:esme.holtom@norfolk.gov.uk) or any of Planning & Transportation's Sustainability Strategy Team.

## High school supervision levels

### Palmer v Cornwall County Council (2009)

In this recently decided case, a 14-year-old was hit in the eye and injured by a rock thrown by another 14-year-old pupil during a lunchtime break. This future model citizen was hurling stones at seagulls but missed! The allegation was that the incident arose due to inadequate supervision and that if there had been suitable supervision, the pupil would not have thrown the rocks as all students had been told and knew not to throw stones.

The arrangements at the school were that years 7 and 8 would congregate on one playing field and years 9 and above on another. In total there were about 300 students outside at the time and there was just one supervisor. This person kept an eye on the younger students and basically ignored the older ones apart from an occasional glance.

The Court of Appeal found that this level of supervision was inadequate and that this led directly to the incident. The Court did not state what would have been an adequate level of supervision, ruling instead that it must come down to risk assessment. However, it was clear to them that just one person could not adequately supervise two playing fields at the same time.



# Safety in premises management

**What part do you play in ensuring that the premises you and your colleagues work in are safe? If you don't think you have a role then you might be surprised to know that you do.**

All employees are responsible for reporting items which have the potential to cause harm. This includes hazards such as boxes stored in walkways, wet floors and faulty electrical equipment.

Nearly 11,000 workers suffered serious injury as a result of a slip or trip last year in the UK. Admittedly not all of these incidents happened on County Council premises, however, slips, trips and falls are one of the top causes of incidents in Norfolk County Council as well.

Managers are responsible for health and safety within their premises and for the management of those premises. In most cases Premises Manager and Line Manager roles are defined, however, there can be a blurring of the edges of these roles, for example, do you know who carries out visual inspections of your immediate work area?

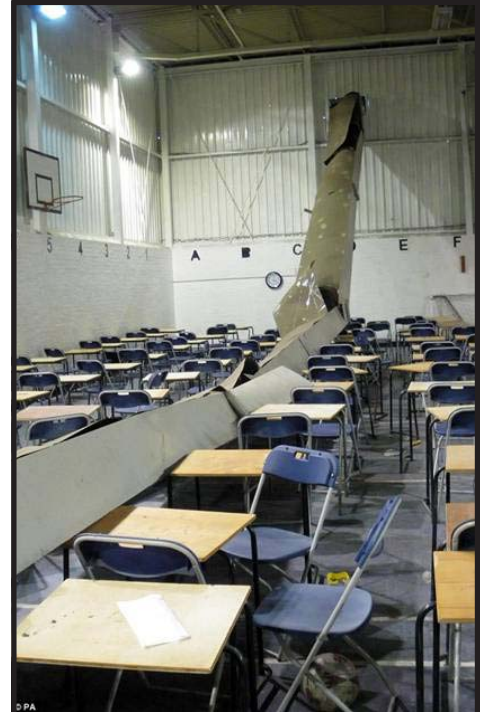
If you are a manager and/or team leader it is recommended that you ensure you know who is responsible for which areas of a building. This will ensure that jobs aren't duplicated or inadvertently ignored. Establishing routines and ensuring records are maintained goes a long way to assist with effective premises management.

NCC does provide comprehensive premises management training. It gives a practical understanding of our systems and requirements for managing premises and the associated health and safety and risk management issues. The course includes areas such as risk assessment, legionella, control of contractors and the management of asbestos.

Fire Risk Assessment training is also provided at NCC - this course is aimed at people in control of, or responsible for, premises fire risk assessments.

If you would like to know more information about health and safety training for premises and line managers please go to: [www.peoplenet.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.peoplenet.norfolk.gov.uk)

If you have any questions or would like further information please email [healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk)



The harsh reality of what happens when safety goes wrong in premises was highlighted recently when twelve children were injured, four seriously, when a heating duct collapsed in a college's sports hall during an exam. About 150 students were in the sports hall sitting an exam when the metal heating duct fell from the ceiling

## Breast Cancer Awareness Month - October 2009

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in women in the UK, affecting 1 in 9 women at some point in their lives. In the UK, there are more than 45,500 cases of breast cancer in women each year. But did you know that men also have breast tissue, and can also be diagnosed with breast cancer?



In men, breast cancer is relatively rare, with only 300 men diagnosed each year in the UK. However, it is vital for men to be aware of this risk. Most of the advice out there is aimed at women, but it is important to know that most of the information that men need is the same as for women. The symptoms, diagnosis and treatment for men are all very similar to women.

### So what can you do to become more aware?

The most important thing is to be breast aware. This means familiarising yourself with how your breasts look and feel so that you know what is normal. You will then be much more likely to notice any unusual changes. You should be looking out for the following changes:

- A change in size or shape
- A change in skin texture such as puckering or dimpling (like orange skin)
- A lump or thickening that feels different from the rest of the breast tissue
- Redness or rash on the skin and/or around the nipple
- If your nipple changes shape or position or becomes inverted (pulled in)
- A swelling in your armpit or around your collarbone
- Discharge (liquid) from one or both of your nipples
- Constant pain in your breast or armpit

If you notice any changes, see your GP straight away. But don't worry, most breast changes will not be cancer. There is a lot of advice, guidance and support available out there. If you would like to find out more, visit one these sites: [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)  
[www.cancerresearchuk.org/breastcancer](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/breastcancer) [www.nhs.uk/livewell/breastcancer](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/breastcancer)

## Sexual Health Week (14-20 September 2009) “One Too Many..... Alcohol & Sexual Health”

The subject of sexual health is often avoided, but this subject should not be evaded any more than any other form of health. More and more campaigns are being set up in order to put sexual health back on the agenda. This year, the Family Planning Association (FPA) are focusing on the link between alcohol and sexual health. Frequently, people put their sexual health at increased risk when they have been drinking.

## “One Too Many..... Alcohol & Sexual Health” (continued . . . )

If you want to cut the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) when you, or perhaps your offspring, mix drink and sex, then check out the FPA website at [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk). Tips on how to have a good time safely can be found on their site.

For further information on condoms, STIs, emergency contraception, missed pills or anything else on sexual health, go to [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

For issues of personal safety: [www.suzyamlplugh.org](http://www.suzyamlplugh.org)

Alcohol: [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk) or [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



## Health and Well-Being Awareness Days

Norfolk County Council values the health and well-being of all its employees. The Well-Being Team will be holding a number of awareness days in the autumn (see below) to help support these matters. These days are free for employees and will include:

- Personalised health checks, incl. blood pressure, BMI, body fat%, etc
- Indian head massages (bookings advisable – contact the Well-Being team)
- Re-usable sports water bottles for all who attend
- Information to take away on smoking cessation, nutrition, alcohol, weight loss, physical activity, stress management, relaxation techniques, musculo-skeletal matters, Norfolk Support Line services, learning and development opportunities, etc.
- Nutritional talks provided by a qualified nutritionist
- Prize draws



Area	Venue	Date	Time
King's Lynn	King's Lynn PDC	Weds 30 September	11:00 – 14:30
Great Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth Library	Weds 7 October	11:00 – 14:30
North Walsham	Northfields Road	Weds 14 October	11:00 – 14:30
Norwich	County Hall	Thurs 5 November	11:00 – 14:30

Don't miss out, come along and make the most of these opportunities!!

Any questions or need more information? – contact the Well-Being team on 01603 223763

# Risky business

## Equality Impact Assessments

Norfolk County Council is committed to promoting equality and good community relations in Norfolk, through everyday practice as both a service provider and employer.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a way of rigorously checking strategies, policies, projects and decisions, to ensure that they are easily accessible. They provide a clear system of quality assurance, and help service managers to focus on meeting the needs of service users in relation to age, disability, gender, race, religion, belief and sexual orientation.

The Council has developed its own system of EIAs, which has been endorsed as Best Practice by the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government.

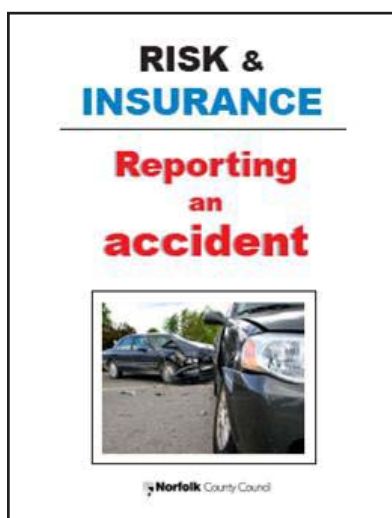
The important part to remember is to carry out the assessment **prior** to the development of any strategy, policy, procedure, project, contract or decision to identify any potential risks/adverse impacts on diverse groups and then

ensure that it is factored into the development process.

Each department has an equality lead officer who can provide support and there is information on the intranet/ internet.

## Reporting an accident – lease car drivers

A short guide on what to do if you are unfortunate enough to be involved in an accident with another vehicle has recently been produced by the Insurance section. This will be issued to all lease car drivers to keep in the vehicle.



The leaflet gives a step-by-step guide on what to do, what details to collect and pass to the other party, contact numbers etc.



It also explains what will happen to your vehicle and how it will get repaired.

It is important that you notify Car Leasing on 01603 223377 as soon as possible after having the accident so that all processes can begin.

If you were at fault, we can arrange for the other party to have a hire car. We can do this at much lower rates than we would pay if they received one through their own insurer but it does rely on you immediately notifying Car Leasing or Insurance (01603 222839) of the incident.

## And finally . . .

I heard on the news that “swine flu could potentially be a threat to every single person in Britain”. Well it’s a good job I’m married then isn’t it!

I tried to call the Swine Flu hotline today but it was a really bad line – all I could hear was crackling!