

# Get Protected

THE FREE NEWSLETTER OF TAMESIDE MBC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & CONSUMER SERVICES

PROVIDING HELP AND ADVICE FOR CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSES OF TAMESIDE

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## Pollute Less, Pay Less



If you're thinking of buying a brand new car, remember that from March, if your car pollutes less, then you'll pay less car tax. A prominent feature of the Chancellor's budget last year was a package of changes to reform car taxation, to encourage the use of smaller, cleaner, fuel-efficient cars. In an effort to tackle global warming, the Government wants to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide from cars.

### Which cars qualify?

Brand new cars registered from 1st March 2001 will be taxed in a different way. Vehicle Excise Duty - or car tax as its more commonly known - will be based on a vehicle's carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission figure and the type of fuel they use. A low CO<sub>2</sub> output means greater fuel efficiency, so you won't just be doing your bit for the environment; you'll also make substantial savings in tax and running costs. A four-band system will apply to each fuel.

### What if my car was registered before 1st March 2001?

All cars registered prior to the 1st March 2001 will continue to be taxed under the existing system - by engine size.

### Where can I find details of my car's CO<sub>2</sub> emission figure?

Information on CO<sub>2</sub> figures for particular model types and the car tax to be charged can be found on the DVLA website [www.dvla.gov.uk/newved.htm](http://www.dvla.gov.uk/newved.htm), or by ringing the leaflet line on 08456052222.

### How much will I pay?

To help you identify the car tax you will pay, the DVLA has banded the following four categories:

Annual VED payable on new passenger cars registered from 1st March 2001.				
	A VEDBAND	B VEDBAND	C VEDBAND	D VEDBAND
CO <sub>2</sub> Emission Figure (g/km)*	Up to 150	151-165	151-165	over 185
1 Alternative Fuel Car	£90	£110	£130	£150
2 Petrol Car	£100	£120	£140	£155
3 Diesel Car	£110	£130	£150	£160

\*g/km = grammes of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometre travelled.

And remember, once you've bought your car, don't forget the other ways you can do your bit to help the environment:

- By driving smoothly, avoiding harsh braking and heavy acceleration,
- Changing up to a higher gear as soon as traffic conditions allow,
- Keeping your car regularly serviced and the engine tuned.

## Stress 'Grows With Salary'

Professionals, managers, teachers and nurses are reporting the highest levels of work-related stress, according to research published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The research found that a person's occupation was the most significant factor in reported stress levels. Almost 50% of respondents who were teachers reported increased levels of stress.

The research also interestingly found that reported stress increased with salary and social class. It was found that those educated to degree level and earning more than £20,000 were reporting the highest stress levels. Little difference was found between men and women.

The new report builds on existing work published in 1999, which found that one in five employees reported being stressed. A link was also found between stress, accidents at work and illness.

Stress can lead to ill health for individuals and to financial losses for their employers. The research confirms that there is no room for complacency about work-related stress and that it is in everyone's interest to help tackle it.

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 **Tameside**  
Metropolitan Borough

# Fat

Another New Year and another resolution to lose weight. And with the season for slimming comes the season for misleading slimming advertising.



The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has condemned dozens of rogue products. Advertisers have been found to either be breaking the ASA's codes of conduct, or to be using misleading or unsubstantiated claims. Readers are warned! The new fat-fighter 'Bonsal' came up with quite an extraordinary advert. The text opens with the challenge:

"Have you ever wondered why sea animals never get fat?"

Apparently it's to do with a revolutionary slimming substance, that of course, is contained in the 'Bonsal' pill.

What the company failed to point out in their advertisement, however, was the fact that most sea creatures spend their entire lives moving around, some of them covering enormous distances. The few creatures that do have an opportunity to stop, or sit down, like seals and walruses, are well known for their thick layers of ... yes, body fat!!

# Turn Your Back on Back Pain

A European safety initiative last October highlighted the biggest single cause of absence from work - musculoskeletal disorders and back pain. And a recent national survey showed that of the 1.2 million people in the UK, who suffered work-related ill health, over 50% associated to back injury - costing employers over £300 million.

Tameside's Health and Safety Unit has identified the licensed trade as an area of the local business community, where the potential for back injury is high. Employees are exposed to considerable manual handling hazards that can arise, for example, from the movement of barrels, often in cramped and awkward positions.

Licensed premises in the Borough have been sent information to help decrease the risk of staff being injured through poor manual handling practice. It is also hoped that employers' awareness of the need to carry out a manual handling risk assessment will increase. The following points should form part of that assessment:

- Avoid the need for manual handling by the use of mechanical aids, e.g. sack trucks.
- Assess the load being lifted and use the correct lifting technique, e.g. bending the knees and NOT the back.
- Reduce the load by reducing the size and weight of the article.

# Food Reviewed

In 2000, food was on everyone's minds as the Food Standards Agency took over from MAFF, and the BSE inquiry reported.

In April, the Food Standards Agency started work. It promised to protect consumers and to be open and transparent. The agency's most high-profile issues in 2000 were genetically modified foods and BSE; the disease having spread to other EU countries. Detailed audits of food inspection services will begin this year and tables have already been published on food inspection performance.

In August, the 'Better Food Labelling Initiative' report highlighted consumer concerns in relation to ingredients listings, country of origin labelling, production methods and misleading claims such as '80% fat free'.

In September, the licensing of English butchers selling raw meat and ready to eat foods began. By December the FSA was claiming 86% compliance.

In October, the £26m, 16 volume, Philips Report of the BSE inquiry (originally announced in Parliament in December 1997), largely cleared individuals of blame. It did, however, highlight the excessive secrecy and 'systematic failures' of the government at that time.

In December, the FSA 'named and shamed' three local authorities for falling down on food hygiene inspection.

And finally ... the year ended with five men being jailed for a total of 26 years for their parts in a condemned meat scam, following a four-year national investigation.

Other key findings from the report indicate that one third of consumers have eaten organic food, but only one third knew of the recommended daily consumption of five portions of fruit and vegetables. Nearly half of consumers feel confident about current food safety measures, but only 12% thought current food labelling 'very easy to understand'. And perhaps quite worryingly, 42% of consumers relied on the media and supermarkets as information sources, whilst only 10% contacted Trading Standards, Environmental Health or other government agencies.

The Food Standards Agency's (FSA) first annual survey of consumer attitudes on food has highlighted that people are often unconcerned or confused by, but rarely well informed about food safety and healthy eating. However, consumers do want more information on topics ranging from chemicals in food, to food hygiene, and believe that the FSA should intervene in food standards and safety issues. The survey revealed that women are still the main shoppers of the household, the elderly are the least interested in food health issues, dining out or takeaways and still only 5% of households have a vegetarian member.

# Environmental Protection Customer Survey

The Division has just completed its customer survey for 2000, of randomly selected customers, who had complained to the department regarding pollution problems between April 1999 and March 2000 and all users of the Emergency Out of Hours Service in the year 2000.

The survey has highlighted the following points and suggested various ways in which our service can be improved.

### Findings included:

- The most common enquiries made to the section related to noise.
- 90% of respondents found the person who dealt with their enquiry to be helpful.
- However 24% would have liked further information.
- No problems identified with response times
- 59% of cases were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

### Improvements include:

- The availability of the noise monitoring equipment needs to be maintained during peak seasons.
- Complainants must be encouraged to inform the Division of continuing problems and use the diary sheets.
- More publicity should be used in cases that result in prosecution to keep the public updated.
- Clear guidelines needed to define issues covered by Emergency Out of Hour Service

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# Don't Give Them an Easy Ride

Over half of car crime is 'opportunistic'. Car crime isn't an inevitable consequence of owning a car, nor is it something to be feared. Most criminals can be outsmarted by taking simple steps to secure your car.

- **Wheel Protection** - many thieves target alloy wheels and the tyres from steel wheels. To protect them, fit locking wheel nuts. These are not expensive and are easy to fit.
- **Security Devices** - locks or other security devices are always great deterrents to vehicle crime. Again, steering wheel and gear stick locks are not expensive and are easy to fit.
- **Immobilisers** - are a sure way to stay out of trouble. Information on vehicle immobilisation products can be obtained by calling the Vehicle Security National Helpline on 0870 5502006
- **Keep your keys safe** - remove the ignition key every time you leave your car. Even when filling up with petrol or just popping into the local shop, or particularly if you warm your car up in winter.
- **Etching** - arrange to have the vehicle registration number, or some other unique identifying number such as the VIN, etched onto all glass surfaces, including the side windows and headlamps.
- **Stereo** - is one of the most sought

after items. Get one that's removable or has a front that can be taken off. Consider marking it with the vehicle registration number, or some other unique identifying number.

- **Security Marking** - consider marking all your valuable, especially those that you frequently take in your car. Mark items with your postcode and keep a note of any serial numbers in a safe place.
- **Removing the temptation** - even an old coat on the back seat is a target for someone to 'smash and grab'. Don't leave anything on display.
  - lock all doors, close all windows and shut the sunroof every time you leave your car unattended, however briefly.
  - when driving, it makes sense to keep valuables out of sight and doors locked, windows closed.
  - If you don't have a garage, always try to park in a well lit, open location. Look out for the police 'Secured Car Parks' scheme.



**Most car crime is preventable. Don't give criminals an easy ride!**

Timeshare means buying the right to spend a set period in a holiday property each year, for three years or longer. Most timeshare resorts are linked to an exchange organisation, which offers to arrange exchanges with owners in other resorts, normally for a fee.

Many people have bought timeshares and have enjoyed using them. However, timeshare touts operate in many resorts. The Department of Trade and Industry receives many distressing letters from people whom touts have pressured into buying timeshares they do not want and cannot afford.

Some companies sell timeshare by getting people to sales presentations. They may offer gifts or free holidays to persuade you to attend. They may suggest you have won a competition and say you have to go somewhere to get the prize. Only after you have arrived do you find out that they are trying to sell you timeshare.

Become a satisfied timeshare owner, by all means, but **DON'T** become a victim.

If someone tries to sell you time share ... THINK:

- Do you want to take this sort of holiday every year?
- Is it good value for money? Remember that when you buy a timeshare, you will still have to pay the costs of flights to and fro, food etc and service charges each year.
- Timeshare is not an investment. Generally, the resale value of a timeshare is far less than the price you have paid for it when new. If the seller offers a 'money back guarantee', check the small print very carefully.



- Shop around. Don't take the first timeshare someone tries to sell you. Consider different resorts in different areas, look in newspapers and magazines, contact resale agencies and compare prices.
- Know your legal rights. Seek advice from the Consumer Advice Centre.
- Remember that terms like 'holidays for life', 'multi-ownership', 'holiday ownership' or 'a new holiday development' are likely to mean timeshare.
- The 'buy-sell con'. If you already have a timeshare, a timeshare seller may try to convince you to buy a better one on the promise that they will sell your existing timeshare to pay for it. Under the 'buy-sell con' this sale never materialises and you will be left with the expenses of both.

## Guidance For Traders - One Day Sales

This is a brief guide to help traders prevent unlawful one-day sales being staged on their premise. Think ... one-day sales, liquidation sales, public auction-type sales - do you really want the disgruntled consumer coming back to you with their complaints, even though the sale was only held in your function room?!

### Here's what you can do:

- Have a System - Make sure that everyone who might take a booking knows the system, knows what to look out for and what questions to ask.
- Keep Records - Ensure that a written record is kept of all requests to book your premise.
- Ring Them Back - If the request is by phone, ask for a number to ring back on. This will help to establish whether the company really exists. Keep the number handy.
- Ask Questions - Ask particularly for

copies of any leaflets and adverts that will be used. Also ask for details of previous locations of sales, details about how things will be priced and whether Trading Standards officers would be welcome.

- Refuse a Booking - If you feel suspicious, politely refuse the booking. You don't have to give a reason. It's your business and your reputation, after all.
- Share the Information - If you turn a trader down, they will probably try somewhere else close by. Warn other local businesses.
- Let Them Know You're Wise - Tell traders that you know about consumer law and that you reserve the right to attend. Also mention that you will notify Trading Standards about the sale.

**And remember, although a refusal to host a one-day sale may offend, it could help to protect the community and local business from unfair competition.**



# Fair Play Charter For The Motor Trade



Complaints about the motor trade are generally high both nationally and locally. And they have been well publicised through the media in programmes like 'Garages from Hell' and 'Watchdog'. Unfortunately these programmes do not tell consumers how to go about rectifying their problems or how to choose a reputable garage in the first place.

In an attempt to address these matters, the Trading Standards Services in Greater Manchester have joined together and introduced the 'Fair Play Charter'. This scheme was introduced, in an attempt to promote businesses that operate in a fair and honest way. The scheme is voluntary and is open to any business involved in the motor trade to show that they are committed to fair, honest trade with consumers. It covers the sales of new and used cars, as well as servicing and repairs.

Trading Standards Authorities cannot approve or recommend the services offered by businesses, but traders who are committed to trading fairly and honestly may apply to join the scheme and sign a pledge that they will comply with certain terms and conditions. A leaflet outlining these conditions is freely available from

the Division.

Members can be recognised by the Fair Play Charter Logo that they display on their premises, on their documentation and in their advertising. Members in the Tameside area are listed below and can be seen on the Council's web-site at [www.tameside.gov.uk/corpgen2/fairplaynames.htm](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/corpgen2/fairplaynames.htm).

**Bells, Oldham Road, Ashton.**  
Stan Davies Car Sales, Wharf Street, Dukinfield.  
**Alexander Auto Engineering Ltd,**  
Plantation Ind Estate, Ashton.  
**A E Knott Ltd,** Henry Street, Denton.  
**Premier Automotive Ltd,** Birch Lane, Dukinfield.  
**Hartshead Motors,** St. Albans Avenue, Ashton.  
**Quicks of Ashton,** Manchester Road, Ashton.  
**Bells Rover Linkcentre Ltd,** Dowson Road, Hyde.  
**Lockwood & Greenwood Ltd,** Audenshaw Road, Audenshaw.  
**Ashton Lyne Motors,** Oldham Road, Ashton.  
**Bristol Street Motors,** Katherine Street, Ashton.  
**J R Hughes,** Norfolk Street, Hyde.  
**Nemo Autos,** 58 Oldham Street, Hyde.

**Remember, if you want to be assured the business you are dealing with is 'Committed to Fair Play', look out for the Fair Play Charter Logo or ask them if they are a Member.**

Could accidents be caused by things that you put in your dustbin? Could you, your family or your refuse collector be injured by the way that you get rid of rubbish?



## Sharp Edges

- Wrap things like **BROKEN GLASS, CROCKERY, KNIVES AND TIN CANS** in thick paper so that they can't cut you. Remember to push in can lids before you wrap them up.
- Take care not to damage the rim, or lid of metal bins. A rough or sharp edge could cause injury.

## Risky Rubbish

Never put the following in your dustbin or bags.

- Liquids - even if they are in a container. It is particularly important not to put in things, which can cause a fire, or an explosion such as petrol, oil or adhesives.
- Oily rags or hot ashes - are another fire risk.
- Medicines of any kind, or hypodermic syringes - these can be harmful and should be returned to your pharmacist.

## Bottles

Use the bottle bank in your area. If there isn't one, put them unbroken into your bin or bag.

## Furniture and other Bulky Items

- Take the doors off old fridges, cookers, etc so children cannot hide inside and suffocate. Smash off any locks.
- Take bulky items to your local civic amenity site.

## Special Services

Contact this division to find out about collection services for bulky items, garden rubbish and building rubble. You can also ask about collecting flammable or toxic chemicals and liquids.

## Buying a Service?

Not a dinner service ... when you get your hair cut at a hairdresser, or take your clothes to a dry cleaner, or ask a garage to repair your car ... you are buying a service.

When you buy a service, you have the right to expect certain standards:

- Anyone who provides a service must do so with reasonable care and skill, to a proper standard of workmanship. If you paid someone to fix your roof because it was letting in water, it should not leak after the work has been completed.
- The service must be completed within a reasonable time. This applies even if you and the person supplying the service have not agreed a time for the work to be finished by.
- The service must be provided for a reasonable charge, as long as no price was fixed in advance. If you fixed the price or agreed some other way of working out the charge at the outset, you cannot complain later that it is unreasonable. A fixed cost is usually called a 'quotation'. Whatever its name, it is legally binding.
- Reliable and appropriate materials or goods should be used for the services. The same law covers goods and materials, as if you were buying them directly.

## E. Coli O157... Oh!

In 1999 the Public Health Laboratories in England, Wales and Scotland confirmed 1,429 cases of E coli infection - and these are the cases that actually get reported!! So...

### • What is it?

Escherichia coli (E.coli) is a group of bacteria, which commonly inhabits the gut of warm-blooded animals, including humans. Most strains of E. coli are harmless, however, some can cause severe illness or even death. Harmful strains, such as E. coli O157, produce a potent toxin, which causes bloody diarrhoea, or life-threatening complications such as kidney failure.

### • Who is most at risk?

Young children and the elderly are most at risk following infection. Unlike most bacteria, E. coli O157 has a very low infective dose. This means that, unlike most cases of food poisoning, when thousands of bacteria must be present before illness occurs, as few as 5 bacteria can be present for E. coli O157 to cause illness.

Treatment is very limited and usually involves maintaining body fluid and monitoring for signs of renal failure.

### • What are the sources of infection?

There are four major sources of infection:

1. Food - either raw / under-cooked meat and meat products, unpasteurised milk, or 'ready to eat' foods that have been contaminated with raw meat.
2. Animal-to-person.
3. Person-to-person.
4. Environmental - such as land or water contaminated with sewage or animal faeces.

### • How can you prevent infection?

Standard hygiene measures will help prevent infection, these include-

1. Washing hands thoroughly with hot soapy water before preparing food, after visiting the toilet, before eating food, and after contact with farm animals or their faeces (on farm gates etc),
2. Disinfecting of food preparation surfaces
3. Ensuring all meat is cooked thoroughly before eating,
4. Avoiding pasteurised milk and milk products, and
5. Not drinking or swimming in water that may be contaminated