

# Get Protected

THE FREE NEWSLETTER OF TAMESIDE MBC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & CONSUMER SERVICES

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## DON'T SLIP UP!

Watching someone slip or trip can be amusing but only if you are not the unfortunate casualty! Slips and trips account for the biggest cause of non-fatal work place injuries and at best will cause an inconvenience and at worse may result in a serious injury that can take a long time to heal.

Take 20 minutes to consider your workplace and where there may be a risk of slips and falls, record what you find and what you are going to do to prevent an accident happening, listed below are some points for you to consider.

- ✓ Choose floor surfaces carefully e.g. avoid having highly polished tiled flooring at the entrance where rain can be carried on shoes and umbrellas increasing the likelihood of slips and falls.
- ✓ Use doormats to absorb water brought in from the outside
- ✓ Locate equipment so that the cables don't cross pedestrian routes
- ✓ Consider where and how spillages can be generated e.g. carrying cups of coffee, cooking activities and how they can be avoided or controlled.
- ✓ The method of cleaning is important, some floor surfaces require specific cleaning methods and equipment to be used e.g. non-slip flooring. It is important to dry the floor after cleaning - displaying wet floor signs doesn't remove the risk.
- ✓ Lighting should be adequate to allow people to see obstructions or changes in floor level.
- ✓ Floors and floor coverings need to be regularly checked and maintained in good repair. Mats that curl should be securely fixed.
- ✓ Premises should be kept tidy and rubbish removed regularly
- ✓ Footwear should be suitable for the work being carried out e.g. flat non-slip shoes in a kitchen.
- ✓ Identify and highlight changes in floor level with tread nosing, floor markings and fit handrails to sloping areas.

For further information please don't hesitate to contact our Call Centre on 0161 342 3941 and ask for our Health & Safety Section

## PEST PIGEONS



The Effects of Feral Pigeons on Personal Health:

Some illnesses are attributed to breathing in dust from pigeon droppings causing a fungal infection in the lungs, which has flu and pneumonia like symptoms. It can lead to hospitalisation with very serious infections.

Feeding pigeons and leaving scraps around causes them to colonise but also encourages other kinds of vermin such as rats to breed in the same areas - an added health risk.

Public sympathy does not recognise the significant health hazard posed by pigeons and many people object to their trapping and culling. Feral pigeons carry diseases harmful to man - significantly more than the brown rat - and yet we wouldn't think of feeding the rat.

The best known disease passed from birds to man is Psittacosis but more than 40 more diseases can be passed from the feral pigeon to humans. This is only one of the aspects of pest control.



## Did You Know?

Ever wondered what the 'e' means after the weight marking on virtually all prepacked goods. Well it indicates that the product has been packed to the average weight system. This means that the content of any one package may be above or below the stated weight as long as the whole production is on average, the stated weight. It is a duty of the producer to demonstrate to Trading Standards Officers (by way of tests and factory inspection) that prepacked weights never fall below specific limits. If they do then Trading Standards can take action against the producer, which could lead to PROSECUTION.

[www.tameside.gov.uk](http://www.tameside.gov.uk)

# ACTS ABOUT ASBESTOS

Asbestos is manufactured from naturally occurring silicate minerals. The three types of asbestos that have been used in the UK are crocidolite (blue), amosite (brown) and chrysotile (white).

Once it is mined the rock mineral is crushed, producing fibres. It is the shape and size of asbestos fibres that enables them to penetrate deep into the lungs. Blue and brown asbestos is thought to be more dangerous as it can be more readily inhaled. You cannot tell the colour of fibres visually as they are combined with other materials and need to be analysed by the laboratory.

## USES OF ASBESTOS

- White asbestos was commonly used in domestic appliances and buildings.
- Brown asbestos was used in thermal insulation up 'til the late 1960's. It was also used in various sprayed applications and insulating boards 'til the late 1970's.
- Blue asbestos, which hasn't been imported into this country since 1972, was used for insulation lagging and sprayed coating.

## COMMON LOCATIONS OF ASBESTOS

- Asbestos cement on garage or shed roofs
- Asbestos cement shed and garage wall panels
- Asbestos cement drain pipes
- Asbestos cement or insulation board soffit, infill panels and partitions
- Asbestos cement on the side of bath panels

## HEALTH RISKS

The risk to health arises when the asbestos is damaged or if the material is drilled, sawn, scrubbed or sanded. It can be released in hot air heating systems and during the vibration of structural wall and ceiling insulation panels. When disturbed, tiny fibres are released into the air. They are easily breathed in and penetrate deep into the lungs, damaging the delicate cells.

## SAFETY

It is difficult to identify asbestos materials. Very few products containing asbestos are available in the shops and those that are on sale should, by law, be labelled to show that they contain asbestos.

## WHAT TO DO

The general rule is to always **leave asbestos alone**, it's usually safe unless it's damaged or disturbed.

If you are in doubt as to whether any material already in your home contains asbestos, or if you suspect your home contains damaged asbestos material, do not try to deal with it yourself – seek expert advice.

## TIPS ON SAFE ASBESTOS REMOVAL

- **Prepare the work area** with disposable polythene sheeting.
- **Wear protective clothing** – disposable overall, paper face mask (complying with EN149) and disposable gloves.
- **Damp down** using a plant sprayer, but don't soak the area.
- **Remove the asbestos** without breaking it up and wrap in polythene sheeting.
- **Visually inspect** the area and clear up any debris by hand – wipe down with disposable damp cloths. Never use a vacuum cleaner as this will just spread the dust around.
- **Pick up** polythene sheeting and remove protective clothing. Dispose of both as asbestos waste.
- **Wash** hands and face after the job is complete.

Asbestos cement can be disposed of **free of charge** by householders at the civic amenity site in Bayley Street, Stalybridge. For further information please don't hesitate to contact our call centre on 0161 342 3941 and ask for the Environmental Protection Section.

## Warranties under Fire



The heat is on the rip-off extended warranty industry, as the competition watchdog announces it will probe the issue we've highlighted for years.

Most warranties are simply a bad deal, and hard sell is often used to persuade consumers to sign up. The Office of Fair Trading asked the Competition Commission to investigate the £800 million industry, and the Commission has now announced initial findings and set out the scope of further inquiries.

Based on its findings so far, the watchdog has decided to look at whether the market is rigged, whether there's a lack of choice for consumers, and whether warranties are overpriced. It will also probe the use of hard sell tactics.

We've said for years that warranties are overpriced, and may often go unused - most household electrical items are unlikely to breakdown in the first few years, during the warranty period. Even if they do, paying for a repair is normally cheaper than a warranty.

# RECYCLING

## What is a Composter?

Composters are recycled plastic bins for the garden. Waste deposited in a composter prevents odour you would normally find in your wheelie bin. All composters have a lid and hatch.

## Why Compost?

In Tameside 100,000 tonnes of household waste is created every year. That is enough to fill a large football stadium. The majority of this waste is disposed of in landfill sites throughout the country. Tameside council is committed to reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill sites, in accordance with the National Waste Strategy 2000. The Strategy specifies that we must recycle or compost 30% of household waste by 2010. The government has also set the target of ensuring that 40% of households with a garden compost by 2001. As a council we are dependant upon the help and support of our residents to enable these targets to be met.

### **Did you know that 20% of the average household dustbin is comprised of organic material?**

Organic waste is biodegradable and when it is buried in landfill sites it rots and produces methane gas. Methane gas can escape into buildings near landfill sites and lead to explosions. It is not necessary to send organic waste to landfill sites as householders can convert it into a useful product. Compost bins can be purchased which convert food waste and other organic material into compost. Composting is one of the Best Practicable Environmental Options for the reduction of waste to landfill. It is possible to reduce 20% of the waste in a bin without causing any environmental damage. This is more environmentally friendly than recycling as no energy input is required for transport or in the recycling process.

During 2002 Tameside MBC carried out a trial kerbside collection scheme for mixed recyclables. The trial covered 600 properties and proved to be a great success. Tameside have now received funding from central government to expand the scheme to cover a further 40,000 households during 2003/4.

## Trading Standards Officers

The Trading Standards Officers inspect all public houses in Tameside over a two year period checking not only that the correct measure is delivered through the optic or beer meters, but that the correct spirit / beer is delivered and that no alcohol has had anything added to it to reduce its strength.

The Department uses expensive equipment that will indicate immediately if it is not the correct manufacturer or that it has been watered down in any way. In addition the Department's officers regularly carry out sampling checks usually under cover to make sure nothing has been tampered with.

Over the last few years anyone found infringing the legislation has had action taken against them through the Magistrates Courts and at the time of going to press I understand that there are others in the pipeline.

At the Trading Standards conference last month Tameside was one of only twenty five authorities that won a Certificate of Excellence issued by the International Federation of Spirit Producers in recognition of the work carried out to protect the consumer from spirits substitution and counterfeiting.

## 'You're a winner - claim your prize!' Envelope on your doormat

The mailshot says you've won a prize and, to claim it, all you need to do is call a premium rate phone number or send off a 'processing fee'. Among the list of cash, cars and fabulous prizes is something worthless - often cheap jewellery that costs far less than what you pay to receive it - and this is what your prize is likely to be, if you're lucky enough to get one at all. Some especially unscrupulous tricksters try to frighten you into parting with your money by claiming they are clairvoyants and that you can only guarantee future happiness by sending them £20. Consumer Minister Melanie Johnson says, 'We're told we should send off money or make a purchase to receive a prize but the chances of ever seeing that money again, let alone the promised reward, are remote.'

### Tactical Tips

- If it looks too good to be true, then unfortunately it probably is.
- Register with the Mailing Preference Service (020 7291 3310): this means advertisers are told not to contact you, although it won't stop mailings from abroad, where many scams originate.
- Do your bit by forwarding suspect mailings to the European Enforcement Team, Office of Fair Trading, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4 8JX.

## THE SYSTEM

What Goes In	What Does Not Go In	Collection Schedule
<b>GREEN BIN</b> Glass Bottles and Jars	<b>GREEN BIN</b> Pyrex Dishes, Sheet Glass	EVERY MONTH
<b>RED SACK</b> Plastic Bottles, Plastic Film (eg carrier bags)	<b>RED SACK</b> Yoghurt Pots, Margarine Tubs, Plastic Trays	(see collection date sticker on bin)
<b>BLUE BIN</b> Newspapers, Magazines, Junk Mail, Scrap Paper	<b>BLUE BIN</b> Yellow Pages, Cardboard	EVERY 8 WEEKS
<b>BLACK BIN</b> Other Household Waste	<b>BLACK BIN</b> Recyclable material that could go in the green or blue bin	EVERY WEEK

## How to get your Basic Food Hygiene and/or your Basic Health and Safety certificate

The courses are run by Tameside Environmental Services Department, by members of staff that are friendly, enthusiastic and experienced in this area.

- They are happy to help with any of your problems and make sure that you receive the best training they can give.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

The course covers a wide range of topics, the main areas are:

1. Health and Safety in the workplace
2. Risk Assessment
3. Occupational Health
4. Electricity and Fire safety
5. Manual Handling and Ergonomics
6. Noise
7. Personal Protective Equipment
8. First Aid
9. Work Equipment
10. Health and Safety Law.

The courses will include a variety of presentations using lots of visual material, including videos. They will also arrange small groups for you, so you can take part in informal group discussions, and there will be a short examination at the end of the day, which you will be fully prepared for.

Both courses last about 6 hours and cost £45 each, this includes:

- \* Tuition fees
- \* Examination fees
- \* Information pack
- \* Certificate.

For more information please do not hesitate to phone the call centre on 0161 342 3941

### FOOD HYGIENE

- It is very important that anyone who is working with or around food has a good understanding and knowledge of food hygiene and safety. The law states that you and your employees must have some form of training in food hygiene to be able to work with food, and this course is one that is recognised.

- You can expect to learn about topics in these seven main areas;

1. Food Poisoning
2. Prevention of Food Poisoning and Food Contamination
3. Personal Hygiene
4. Bacteriology
5. Premises, Equipment and Pest Control
6. Cleaning and Disinfection
7. Legislation

- If you pass the course you will be legally allowed to work within the food industry and have a good understanding of food hygiene. The actual qualification is the CIEH certificate and it is nationally recognised.

## Handwashing

Washing your hands before and during food preparation is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of food poisoning bacteria.

A survey by the Food and Drink Federation, published during National Food Safety Week 2001, found that:

- 26% of men and 17% of women said they do not always wash their hands before preparing food.
- 31% of men and 17% of women said they do not regularly wash their hands after using the toilet.

If you don't wash your hands before food preparation, your hands could be covered in dirt and bacteria from the toilet, the bin or from many other sources inside and outside the home. These could then be transferred onto food and cause food poisoning.

It is also very important to wash your hands after handling raw foods because you could spread bacteria from them to other foods (cross-contamination).

Make sure you wash your hands thoroughly, using warm water and a liquid soap. Work up a good lather and make sure you wash your wrists, hands, fingers, thumbs, fingernails, and in between the fingers.

Rinse the soap off your hands with clean water. It's also important to dry your hands thoroughly because bacteria spread more easily if your hands are damp. Dry your hands on a clean hand towel, not on a tea towel or your apron.

And remember:

- Don't handle food when you are ill with stomach problems, such as diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Don't touch food if you have sores or cuts, unless they are covered with a waterproof dressing.



## Fridge Safety Checklist

Where is the coldest part of your fridge?

Well it depends upon the type of fridge that you own but more than likely it will be the bottom shelves. In frost-free fridges, the cold air is circulated around so their temperature is even throughout. However, in icebox fridges the coldest part is often the top and middle shelves depending on the model.

**Coldest zone: 0°C to 5°C.**

- Store foods here that must be kept cold to keep them safe. Wrap or cover all raw or uncooked foods e.g. ready meals, soft cheeses, cooked meats, deserts.

**Cool zones**

- Store foods here that are best kept cool to help them stay fresher for longer e.g. milk, yoghurt, fruit juices, hard cheeses.

**Salad bin**

This is the warmest part of the fridge e.g. vegetables, fruit, fresh salad items.

