

# Davies Public Sector

## Surge warning and mitigation advice

Those of us in the south of England are all aware that it's been pretty warm and dry these last few months. Whilst there has been some rainfall in recent weeks, our lawns remain parched and cracked. There's still likely to be a hosepipe ban just around the corner and it won't be long before the media start bringing out all of their annual summer weather articles about houses cracking and subsiding

But just how dry has it actually been? In Davies Public Sector, we have been tracking the dry weather since November 2016. Using the Met Office "Rainfall Anomaly" maps and charts it has been possible to see in a very graphic way how dry it has been compared to the 1981- 2010 average. For each of the last 8 months, the Met Office charts have shown there to have been a rainfall deficit in the SE of England compared to the average for those months over the last 30 years. That doesn't include the dry summer of 1976, after which subsidence cover commenced and was added to domestic policies, but does include the last subsidence "event year" of 2004.

What does this mean for cash strapped local authorities, housing associations and others? Well, almost certainly there will be an increase in the number of tree root claims against them towards the end of this year. As less water remains in the soil, tree roots extend to find new water sources after causing damage along the way. We have already seen a surge of new tree root claims resulting from last year's relatively average summer.

In the meantime, we are increasingly being chased by third party adjusters and solicitors anxious to know what councils have decided to do with their implicated trees, as last year's cracks have failed to close over the winter and worsened this summer. As the ground hardens and the clay subsoil shrinks any rain we do have will merely run off leaving the clay desiccated.

The message is clear. Those hard decisions about tree works shelved since last year need to be made and the implicated trees cut before further damage is done and the third parties move towards a structural underpinning solution, trebling the value of the existing claims against the councils involved and seeing hundreds of new claims arrive at their doors.

In Davies Public Sector, we have been dealing with tree root liability claims for local authorities nationwide for 25 years and pride ourselves on saving local authorities and their insurers money by giving effective advice on tree mitigation works, causation, liability, scope of repairs and costs. But we need your help to save you money. Those trees that are damaging houses need to be effectively controlled, particularly in hot spot areas such as in certain parts of London. Those resources that you do have need to be shown to have been reasonably allocated. Regular inspections of the higher risk larger more thirsty trees could be funded by reducing regularity of inspections on lower risk trees.

Take what action you can now to control your trees, appoint Davies to handle your claims at first notification and working together with your tree officers, we will minimise the effects of dry weather.

### Contact Us

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