

Cords and Chains in Window Coverings - a Hidden Home Hazard Information Event

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- Good afternoon everyone. My name is Richard O'Brien, and I'm the Director of International Programs and Intergovernmental Affairs at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in Washington, D.C.
- I would like to thank the EU Commission Health and Consumers Directorate General (DG Sanco) for organizing this event on such an important topic and for the opportunity to provide a few words about the international harmonization effort on window coverings.

- Just a few hours ago, my agency announced a major recall in the United States, which speaks to the importance of our discussion today.
- As you know, the regulatory authorities in the United States, Canada, and Europe have joined **forces** to call for standards organizations to develop stronger and more comprehensive international safety standards on window coverings. .. Australian authorities recently joined this international effort that is of extreme importance to all of us.
- Numerous children are dying in window covering incidents in the United States, Europe, Canada, Australia, and in other parts of the world, bringing irreparable suffering and damage to so many families.

- These deaths may have been preventable if there were technical standards that eliminated the strangulation risks associated with these products.
- Unfortunately, there is not a single standard across the globe that designs out the risk of strangulation that window covering products present.
- And that's what this international effort intends to bring: increased awareness across many jurisdictions to help accelerate the development of a strong standard—hopefully an internationally harmonized standard— that will reduce the risk of death and injury to young children.
- Without harmonization of standards risk of errors and mistakes in the supply chain increase. Lack of

harmonization also causes manufacturers to change product specifications to produce, test, and certify to different standards if they want to sell their products in different markets.

- These unnecessary complexities and mistakes may compromise safety along supply chains and increase the risk of substandard products entering our markets.
- We at the CPSC are optimistic that all stakeholders in Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia will continue collaborating and align the technical requirements for window coverings as they design out the risk of strangulation associated with these products.

- In the United States, the Window Covering Manufacturers Association (WCMA) announced in October 2010, that it has opened the revision process for the ANSI/WCMA Provisional American National Standard for Safety of Corded Window Covering Products.
- In this comprehensive revision, WCMA is committed to minimizing the risks associated with free-hanging operating cords, continuous loops, and bead chains in all window covering products.
- Furthermore, WCMA is committed to delivering a draft standard for ANSI canvass ballot by the end of National Window Covering Safety Month in October 2011, if not sooner.

- To expedite the development of this next revision, WCMA has established six working groups within its Technical Committee.
- These working groups will focus on six specific areas: test for cord accessibility; test for the prevention of hazardous loops; wide operating cords; continuous loop and bead chain products; operating cords; and labels and warnings.
- To help ensure that each working group is progressing in a coordinated fashion, a WCMA Steering Committee has been formed to lead the overall effort.
- The CPSC's expert staff will play an important role in the process of developing a comprehensive, consensus standard, and Chairman Tenenbaum

has told the WCMA that she will be seeking frequent updates on the committee's progress over the next year.

- The technical staff from the standard developing organizations and regulatory authorities in Canada, Europe, and Australia will be invited to participate in the first Steering Committee meeting that will be held in the upcoming weeks.
- We would like to take the opportunity to thank the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the Canadian Standards Associations (CSA), and the Window Covering Manufacturers Association (WCMA).
- These standard-developing organizations are working together and exchanging information as

they work on the revision of their respective standards in their particular markets.

- We appreciate their efforts to coordinate their activities, and we look forward to continuing this productive exchange toward harmonization with all of them.
- We also would like to thank the CPSC's counterpart agencies: DG Sanco, Health Canada, and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission for the opportunity to work together on this important issue of concern to all of us.
- Thank you very much.