UNITED STATES
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
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Remarks of Peter A. Feldman
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I'm pleased to be here this morning, and to introduce the next panel on the various regulatory perspectives that exist on IoT. Joining the panel will be Pinnuccia Contino, Rod Freeman, and CPSCP's own Rich Obrien.

When we talk about responding to the challenges of new technologies, a useful place to start is to understand consumer expectations. If a connected product comes to market, it's because of consumer demand. Some consumer, somewhere, wants that product to perform some function, to fill some need, to achieve some efficiency.

In yesterday's discussion about IoT safety, it was said that "consumers expect and believe connected products are safe and secure." I'm not sure consumer preferences are that black and white. There's no such thing as a completely secure product, just as there's no such thing as a completely safe product. If a product is connectable, it's likely hackable.

In the same vein, as a leading consumer product safety regulator, CPSC's charge is not to rid the market of all unsafe product, but rather to protect consumers from unreasonable risk of injury. This shapes how CPSC things about its approach to connected products and IoT. Our jurisdiction begins and ends with product safety. Unlike our sister agencies like the Federal Trade Commission, we are not a privacy or security regulator.

But it is conceivable that a common nexus could exist between a security or privacy vulnerability and an unreasonable risk of harm to a consumer. It could be in the form of a single bad line of code or a common exploit.

As CPSC considers consumer safety in terms of IoT, it's important that we advance our own expertise and in-house capabilities. That's why I introduced a measure to hire the agency's first Chief Technologist. It's my hope that the Chief Technologist will serve as the Commission's principle officer on innovation and the potential safety implications associated with emerging technologies. The role will expand agency expertise and provide strategy and leadership across various offices and directorates. The Chief Technologist will support the agency's mission with respect to emerging technologies, including IoT, wearables, AI, among other things.

I agree that a standards-based approach to IoT is preferable to a global patchwork of best practices and regulations. Therefore, we are paying very close attention to the work currently underway at ASTM, UL, NIST and elsewhere.

To encourage innovation and keep barriers to entry low, it's important that CPSC not posture itself as a premarket approver. I believe that regulations, if needed, should address specific, real world harms as opposed to hypothetical ones. And if you're paying attention to discussions like this one, you'll hear a lot of hypotheses.

It's also important that regulators work together to ensure a system that is thoughtful, not contradictory, and that prioritizes innovation. That's why I'm pleased my recent proposal to pause CPSC's development of its own IoT best practice guidelines was accepted, in favor of instead building on CPSC's leadership to coordinate with sister agencies with whom we share jurisdiction over these devices.

Our approach to IoT, and emerging technologies in general, should be one of humility. It's been said that consumers do no benefit from, and consumer safety is not advanced by, regulatory actions that needlessly result in higher costs, less competition, and fewer choices.

As the agency defines its role in the 21st Century, it's important that it does so in a way that protects innovation and maximizes CPSC's competency and credibility.

With that, let's give a warm welcome to our panel.