



# **REPORT ON CPSC's FY 2015 PARTICIPATION IN SENIOR SAFETY ACTIVITIES**

*The views expressed in this report are those of CPSC staff, and this report has not been reviewed or approved by, and may not reflect the views of, the Commission.*

September 2015

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## BACKGROUND

In establishing and revising its priorities, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (“CPSC” or “Commission”) considers the vulnerability of the population at risk, including risks to children, the elderly, and the handicapped.<sup>1</sup> There were an estimated 37,200 consumer product-related deaths in 2010. Seniors suffered almost 65 percent of these deaths (adults 65 and older), despite this group making up only 13 percent of the U.S. population. Seniors also have suffered an estimated 5 million injuries each year since 2008. The number, rate, and costs of serious injuries to seniors associated with consumer products rise every year, and the size of the population of older adults in the United States is rising quickly, as well. By 2030, older adults will comprise 20.6 percent of the U.S. population. By 2050, the senior population is expected to more than double, from 40 million in 2010, to more than 88 million.

The cost to society associated with injuries to seniors is significant. CPSC estimates that the total societal costs of injuries related to, but not necessarily caused by, consumer products involving older adults, including pain and suffering costs, exceed \$100 billion annually.

On May 19, 2014, then-Acting Chairman Robert Adler announced the Senior Safety Initiative to focus a portion of our resources on reducing consumer product related deaths and injuries suffered by seniors (adults 65 and older).<sup>2</sup> The Senior Safety Initiative includes:

- expansion of CPSC’s integrated teams to include a Mechanical & Seniors Hazards Team;
- publication of a wide ranging Hazard Screening Report focused on seniors;
- membership on the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics;
- continuing to work with voluntary standard organizations and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on rule-making activity and educational materials relating to adult portable bed rails; and
- participation during Older Americans Month 2014: *Safe Today. Healthy Tomorrow.*

In fiscal year 2015, the Commission directed staff to hold a Senior Safety Summit focusing on risks to the senior population who use consumer products. In addition, the Commission directed staff to prepare a report on the Summit to be published on [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).<sup>3</sup> As planning began for CPSC’s Senior Safety Summit, staff reached out to federal partners and learned about several activities already under way for the 2015

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<sup>1</sup> 16 C.F.R. part 1009.8 Policy on Establishing Priorities for Commission Action.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/About-CPSC/Commissioners/Robert-Adler/Commissioner-Adler-Statements/Acting-Chairman-Robert-Adler-Introduces-Senior-Safety-Initiative/>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Fiscal Year 2015 Operating Plan. December 12, 2014. <http://www.cpsc.gov/global/about-cpsc/budget-and-performance/fy2015operatingplannew.pdf>

*White House Conference on Aging*, including the National Council on Aging’s (“NCOA”) *Falls Prevention Summit* and the Health and Human Services (“HHS”) *2015 Healthy Aging Summit*. CPSC decided to make the Senior Safety Summit an interagency collaboration by participating in the NCOA’s *Falls Prevention Summit* and teaming up with HHS on the *2015 Healthy Aging Summit*. CPSC’s participation in the HHS *2015 Healthy Aging Summit* (“Summit”) included planning and participating in several sessions during the Summit.

## **THE 2015 WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING AND THE NATIONAL FALLS PREVENTION SUMMIT**

The *White House Conference on Aging* is a once-a-decade conference sponsored by the [Executive Office of the President of the United States](#), which makes policy recommendations to the President and Congress regarding the aged. The *2015 White House Conference on Aging* was held on July 13, 2015.<sup>4</sup>

On April 30, 2015, the National Council on Aging held a *Falls Prevention Summit* in Arlington, VA.<sup>5</sup> The *Falls Prevention Summit* constituted an official *2015 White House Conference on Aging* event. This conference brought together a diverse stakeholder community, including recognized experts in falls prevention, organizations from the health and aging sector and professional associations, as well as foundations and corporations, to address ways to reduce the risk of falls to the senior population (65 and older). Falls represent approximately 75 percent of all injuries to people over the age of 65; and the items causing these falls are often consumer products, such as furniture, carpets, and telephone cords.

Commissioner Adler and CPSC staff attended the *Falls Prevention Summit*. Staff participated in the “Home Safety” breakout session, which focused on home safety measures. This session included information, assessments and home modification recommendations that can reduce home hazards, improve independent functioning, and lower the risk of falls. Risk is lowered through increasing awareness and disseminating information and providing product options for caregivers and older adults to reduce falls. Presenters noted that no one wants to be called “old,” and effective messaging may target caregivers, often adults who are over 50, taking care of their aging parents. Presenters also noted the complexity of the senior safety issue, which includes decreased capability and the impacts of medication, along with new interactions with historic consumer products (*e.g.*, products long in use that now pose different risk, given capability and medication impacts). The presenters noted that additional issues may arise as a result of interactions with new products introduced (*e.g.*, products like mobility aids and other devices intended to help seniors adapt to changing capabilities).

CPSC’s role in reducing the risk of falls may include:

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<sup>4</sup> [www.whitehouseconferenceonaging.gov](http://www.whitehouseconferenceonaging.gov).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncoa.org/wp-content/uploads/Falls-Summit-WHCOA-043015.pdf>.

- providing safety messaging to older consumers and their caregivers on fall prevention measures;
- working with voluntary standards organizations to develop new standards and improving existing consumer product standards to reduce the risk of falls and reduce home safety hazards; and
- collaborating with other federal agencies, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and foundations to educate older consumers and their caregivers on fall prevention measures.

## **THE 2015 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES HEALTHY AGING SUMMIT**

In May 2015, the Commission published a *Federal Register* notice<sup>6</sup> that announced CPSC’s participation in the *2015 Healthy Aging Summit* sponsored by the HHS, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (“HHS/ODPHP”) and the American College of Preventive Medicine (“ACPM”).<sup>7</sup> CPSC’s participation in the Summit was noticed in our Public Calendar and in an *OnSafety* blog.<sup>8</sup> The aim of the Summit was to highlight the science of aging and preventive services and identify ways to improve the quality of life for older adults.

### ***CPSC’s Participation in the 2015 Healthy Aging Summit***

The *2015 Healthy Aging Summit* was held in Washington, D.C., on July 27- 28. There were more than 570 registered attendees. Partnering with HHS on the *2015 Healthy Aging Summit* maximized CPSC’s exposure to the variety of stakeholders attending the conference. The Summit covered a wide range of topics related to aging and safety, including the science of aging, the benefits of social engagement and the impact of isolation and age-friendly communities. In addition, the Summit provided a forum for CPSC to solicit information to help address the risks to the senior population from consumer products. CPSC staff worked with the Summit’s organizing committee to suggest speakers relevant to our safety mission and older adults. Stephen Hanway, Directorate for Epidemiology, presented on CPSC’s research on consumer products that disproportionately affect seniors, such as products that are most likely to cause falls.

In addition, at CPSC staff’s recommendation, the National Fire Protection Association (“NFPA”) presented its senior safety program, *Remembering When™: A Fire and Fall Prevention Program for Older Adults*.<sup>9</sup> CPSC staff also recommended human factors expert, Debra Young, as a speaker for the Summit’s Neighborhood and Built

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<sup>6</sup> 80 Federal Register 30053 (May 26, 2015). Announcement of Consumer Product Safety Commission’s Participation in the 2015 Healthy Aging Summit.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/05/26/2015-12589/announcement-of-consumer-product-safety-commissions-participation-in-2015-healthy-aging-summit>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.2015healthyagingsummit.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://onsafety.cpsc.gov/blog/2015/05/20/2015-healthy-aging-summit/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/for-public-educators/education-programs/remembering-when>

Environment Track's panel discussion on *The Impact of Products, Space, Services, and Isolation on the Aging*.

The Summit's agenda was programmed to include CPSC's participation in three ways:

- *Staff-led "Speed Share" sessions, July 27 and 28.* Operating a display in the main ballroom, CPSC employees explained to Summit attendees how to navigate our website, [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) with a focus on safety information for older adults. Staff distributed a variety of safety materials, including our publication, "Safety for Older Consumers – Home Safety Checklist."
- *Staff moderated and participated in a panel discussion.* On Monday, July 27, Dr. George Borlase, Office of Hazard Identification and Reduction, moderated a panel discussion titled, *The Impact of Products, Space, Services, and Isolation on the Aging*. The four panelists included CPSC's Stephen Hanway, Directorate for Epidemiology.
  - Presenting first, Stephan Hanway reviewed the methodology and findings of CPSC's 2013 Senior Hazards Sketch<sup>10</sup> and noted areas for further research.<sup>11</sup> He discussed CPSC's research on products that disproportionately affect seniors, such as those that are most likely to cause falls. Mr. Hanway explained that falls represent around 75% of all injuries to people over the age of 65, and that the items causing these falls are often consumer products, such as furniture, carpets, and telephone cords. Additionally, consumer products also cause non-fall-related incidents, such as home fires. The CPSC presentation successfully framed the panel's focus on products and the home environment.
  - Kamili Wilson, AARP Foundation, presented an AARP Foundation study titled, *The Impact of Isolation on Older Americans*. Wilson's presentation on the study highlighted the negative health effects of isolation, including decreasing interactions and social networks for older adults. The health consequences of isolation, Wilson explained, include: increased cognitive decline, faster growth into dementia, loss of impulse control, increase inflammation in body systems, increased cardiovascular changes, as well as other changes on a genetic level. More research is needed to understand and address isolation, and to find out about programs that implement solutions for social connection in communities throughout the United States, plus public health leadership that elevates isolation on the public health agenda.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cpsc.gov/global/research-and-statistics/injury-statistics/older%20adults/seniorhazardssketch2013.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/SteveHanway/senior-safety-summit-cpsc-2015>

- Debra Young, M.Ed, EmpowerAbility, LLC, discussed the paradigm shift toward Better Living Design (also known as Universal Design), an emerging design trend for products, housing, and communities. Ms. Young’s presentation challenged consumer product designers to analyze product use and living space in the context of Universal Design and aging-in-place, along with the sensory needs and changes that occur with aging and disability.
- Lisa Chase, PhD, University of St. Augustine, presented on her research titled, *Self-Esteem and Activity Patterns in Older Adults: Implications for the Aging Adult*. This presentation focused on how important self-esteem and physical activity are for the older adult population, and how physical activity and self-esteem tend to decrease as we age. She discussed the components and role of self-esteem in the aging adult and how self-esteem contributes to behavior, choices, and, ultimately, quality of life. In addition, Dr. Chase described interventions that may have a positive impact on overall quality of life in the aging adult. Dr. Chase also drew upon the content of the other speakers to highlight factors of self-esteem among older adults to tie the presentations together.

The panelists highlighted the holistic approach needed to raise awareness of consumer product-related hazards to older adults. There are disparities between physical and mental capabilities in older adults; and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to minimizing consumer product hazards for seniors.

- *A staff-led discussion during the “Consumer Product Safety Listening Session”* took place on Monday, July 27. Patricia Adair, Directorate for Engineering Sciences, listened to a suggestion from a Summit attendee regarding how CPSC could address consumer product safety for seniors better. The discussion focused on installing consumer products in the home, noting that often, injuries to seniors occur not because of a defect in the product, but because the product was installed improperly. Adair encouraged attendees to submit written comments to the CPSC, and she provided instructions for submitting comments.

Taking the lessons learned from the HHS *2015 Healthy Aging Summit*, as well as the NCOA’s *Fall Prevention Summit* to address the growing segment of the U.S. population over age 65, CPSC will consider pursuing activities with the National Fire Protection Association around their “Fires and Falls” senior safety campaign; and building relationships with other agencies and organizations on senior safety in and around the home. Additional epidemiological analysis will be conducted in areas involving seniors and consumer products.

## **CPSC ATTENDEES**

### *NCA Falls Prevention Summit:*

Commissioner Robert Adler  
Sarah A. Klein, Office of Commissioner Adler  
Jennifer W. Feinberg, Office of Commissioner Adler  
Patricia K. Adair, Directorate for Engineering Sciences

### *2015 Healthy Aging Summit:*

Sarah A. Klein, Office of Commissioner Robert Adler  
George Borlase, Office of Hazard Identification and Reduction  
Stephen Hanway, Directorate for Epidemiology  
Patricia Adair, Directorate for Engineering Sciences  
Patty Davis, Office of Communications  
John McGoogan, Office of Communications  
Marissa Hamel, Student Intern, Office of Commissioner Buerkle  
Jennifer Jackson, Student Intern, Directorate for Engineering Sciences  
Grace Fansler, Student Intern, Directorate for Health Sciences

## **RESOURCES**

2015 Healthy Aging Summit Agenda:

<http://www.2015healthyagingsummit.org/uploads/4/1/8/9/4189672/agenda-at-a-glance072415.pdf>

2015 Healthy Aging Summit Full Program:

<http://www.2015healthyagingsummit.org/uploads/4/1/8/9/4189672/fullprogram072315.pdf>

2015 Falls Free© National Falls Free Action Plan. <https://www.ncoa.org/resources/2015-falls-free-national-falls-prevention-action-plan/>

CPSC's Neighborhood Safety Network toolkit. <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Neighborhood-Safety-Network/Toolkits/Older-Adults/>