Freezer, Dryer, Cooler and Refrigerator
Entrapment Deaths to Children

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety
Commission (CPSC) has received reports of
numerous suffocation deaths involving
children who crawled inside latch type
freezers, clothes dryers, combination
washer/dryer units, picnic coolers, ice boxes in
campers, and old-style latch type refrigerators.
Most of the victims were four to seven years
old. In all cases, the doors could not be easily
pushed open from the inside. In some of the
incidents associated with clothes dryers, the
appliance was accidentally turned on while the
child was inside.

Frequently, the children were playing "hide-
and-seek" and the appliance or chest provided
a deceptively good place to hide. When the
door slammed shut, the tight fitting gasket on
most of the appliances cut off air to the child.
This, along with the insulated construction of
the appliance, also prevented the child’s
screams from being heard. But abandoned
appliances are not the only items involved with
accidents like these. Entrapment deaths have
been reported in products in use or stored in
the kitchen, laundry room, basement, or
garage. Deaths also have occurred in ice boxes
located in campers parked outside the home.

The Federal Refrigerator Safety Act requires
that refrigerators be capable of being opened
from the inside. However, there may still be
some appliances in the home that do not have
these safety features.

CPSC recommends that you identify
appliances or ice chests in your house, garage
or recreational vehicles, which may present an
entrapment hazard and:

- Childproof old-style refrigerators and
  other appliances which are to be discarded
  or are in storage. The surest method is to
  take off the door completely and in most
cases this is a simple process using a
  screwdriver. It is unlawful in many local
  jurisdictions to discard old refrigerators
  without first removing the door.

- Keep children away from old-style
  refrigerators, freezers, dryers or coolers
  still in use. Lock the door to your utility
  room and warn children not to play inside
  these appliances.

To report an unsafe product or a product-related
injury, visit www.SaferProducts.gov or call our
toll-free Hotline at (800) 638-2772.