



U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
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Manufacturers, Importers, and Retailers of Holiday Lights and Decorative Outfits

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent federal regulatory agency responsible for protecting consumers from unreasonable risks of injury and death from consumer products. Our authority in this instance is set forth in the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA), 15 U.S.C. §§ 2051–2089.

I am writing to urge you to make certain that the holiday lights and decorative outfits that you import, manufacture, distribute, or sell in the United States comply with the currently applicable voluntary safety standard, UL 588 – *Seasonal and Holiday Decorative Products*, which you can purchase from Underwriters Laboratory Inc. (www.ul.com).

Each year, individuals are seriously injured or killed by seasonal lights and decorative outfits that use undersized wiring, use insufficient strain relief, or omit fuses. From 1980 through 1996, CPSC received reports of 202 deaths and 753 nonfatal incidents involving seasonal lights and decorative outfits that resulted in a fire and/or shock hazard. There were an average of 44.3 nonfatal incidents and 11.9 deaths per year. The UL standard (UL 588) addressed these issues by requiring proper strain relief for wire attachments at the lamp holders in 1994, and by requiring fuses and thicker wiring in 1997. For the period from 2000 to 2013, the average number of nonfatal incidents per year dropped to 26.1, and the average number of deaths per year dropped to 3.1. CPSC staff believes that the changes in the UL standard to incorporate the 1994 and 1997 requirements for strain relief, fuses, and wire size have had an effect on reducing the number of injuries and deaths for seasonal lights and decorative outfits.

Inasmuch as the UL standard has been in place for many years, the CPSC's Office of Compliance and Field Operations staff considers holiday lights and decorative outfits that do not meet the portions of the safety standard referenced above to be defective and to present a substantial product hazard under Section 15(a) of the CPSA, 15 U.S.C. § 2064(a). Should the staff encounter such products, we may seek detention, seizure, destruction, or recall of these products.

No persuasive reason exists for you to import, manufacture, distribute, or sell seasonal lights and decorative outfits that do not meet the UL standard, especially because you are now on direct notice and have direct knowledge of our safety-related concerns, to the extent you were not directly knowledgeable already.

Accordingly, I urge you to review your product line immediately and ensure quickly that all holiday lights and decorative outfits that you manufacture, import, distribute, or sell in the United States are in compliance with the safety standard referenced above. CPSC staff will follow up, as appropriate, to ensure that firms are meeting their obligations in this area.

Section 15(b) of the CPSA, 15 U.S.C. § 2064(b), requires every manufacturer, importer, distributor, and retailer of consumer products to report immediately to the Commission when it obtains information that reasonably supports the conclusion that a product distributed in commerce contains a defect that could create a substantial product hazard or creates an unreasonable risk of serious injury or death. The statute also provides for imposition of civil and criminal penalties for failing to report the required information. CPSC staff shall use all available tools in furtherance of our efforts to ensure consumers are not placed at unreasonable risk of injury from hazardous products.

If you have any questions or we can be of any assistance, you may contact Mary Kroh, CPSC Compliance Officer, at 301-504-7886, or mkroh@cpsc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc J. Schoem", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marc J. Schoem