

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Log of Meeting

SUBJECT: WCMA All Stakeholders Meeting

DATE OF MEETING: November 9, 2010

LOCATION: CPSC Headquarters, Bethesda MD

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Rana Balci-Sinha

CPSC ATTENDEES: Renae Rauchschalbe, Compliance
Rana Balci-Sinha, Human Factors
Bob Ochsman, Human Factors
Patricia Bittner, International Programs
Roberta Telles, International Programs
Greg Rea, Laboratory Sciences
Mark Schoem, Compliance
Scott Wolfson, Public Affairs

NON-CPSC ATTENDEES: Ralph Vasami, WCMA
Shannon Whittle, Health Canada
Stephen Drew, Health Canada
Agnieszka Jarmula, EU Delegation
Tom Merker, Springs Window Fashions
Joe Jankoski, Hunter Douglas
Jeff Sendlak, Bureau Veritas
Bill Vestal, Safe-T-Shade
Bob Pharr, Safe-T-Shade
Lora Vestal, Safe-T-Shade
Will Lynch, Safe-T-Shade
Apryl Bossler, BOSlide
Ron Bossler, BOSlide
Debra Haire, JC Penney
Bill Taylor, Rowley
Michael Hollander, Whole Space
Jeanelle Dech, CHF Academy
Jack Feng, Décor/Levolor/Kirsch
Mark Johnson, Décor/Levolor/Kirsch
Steven Rosenfeld, Somfy Systems
Lawrence Wolfin, Textal Systems
David Cross, Belgion Shade
David Stevenson, Safe-T-Shade
Shannon Ledair, WF Vision Magazine
Emily Ruger, Embassy of Canada
Linda Kaiser, PFWBS
Carol Pollack-Nelson, Independent Safety Consulting

Martin Denney, Gale Pacific
Derick Marsh, RollEase
Courtney Hopkins, Kenney
Mike Hanley, Kenney
Jeff Plungis, Bloomberg
David Kirby, Lutron Electronics

On the conference call:

Chris Outlaw, Hunter Douglas
Joe Cannaverde, RollEase
Ann Wang, Golden Champion
Bray Smith, Phase II Products
Mary Ann Plumlee, Window Covering News
Ian Brody, CSA
Cinzia Missiroli, CEN
Ken Powell, British Blind and Shade Association

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

- 1) Ralph Vasami, Executive Director of WCMA, discussed the current status and the highlights of the activities since the publication of ANSI/WCMA A100.1 standard in September 2010. The activities are as follows:
- 2) All comments were reviewed and six workgroups were established to address the risks associated with cords. The groups include accessibility test in Appendix C, refining the hazardous loop test in Appendix D, wide cords (Appendix E of the current standard gives some guidance but the next version of the standard will have tests), operating cords, looped bead chains and nylon cords, and labels & warnings including pictograms, consolidating the warnings, and labels on the package. The issues will be looked at comprehensively. He indicated that a label on the outside of the package may be available sooner than that as a best practice.
- 3) A steering committee has been established to oversee the activities of the task groups. The working groups will meet weekly or biweekly and provide status update every month to the steering committee. Steering committee will meet monthly to review the progress. The steering committee will report to the technical committee in a quarterly basis. Team leaders are encouraged to bring issues as soon as they come up to the steering committee. Consumer safety advocates will be involved, review the information, and provide input at the steering committee level so that questions can be answered in a timely fashion. Currently teams are working on finalizing their project charters and their missions, timelines and milestones. Ralph is to schedule the future stakeholders meeting dates. There are already volunteers for these groups and they expect to receive more. Stephen Drew from Health Canada will be a part of the task groups as well.
- 4) Carol Pollack-Nelson asked that the consumer safety advocates be included at the task group level and indicated that they have various areas of technical expertise to offer to the subcommittees.
- 5) Ralph reiterated the association's intent to minimize the risks associated with operating cords and looped bead chains and cords and to draft a standard ready for balloting by 31 October 2011. The new standard will follow a regular ANSI standard development process and will not be a provisional standard.
- 6) Some challenges that were outlined include:
 - a. Multiple products and multiple operating systems require multiple solutions.
 - b. Aligning and managing six working groups will be logistically challenging.

- c. Coordinating input and review by key stakeholders
 - d. Timeline to draft a standard to make sure all groups are moving at a fast pace.
 - e. Data and testing needed to develop and validate solutions. Standard is not a prescriptive standard but will have performance requirements and test procedures.
 - f. Industry changes must be accepted in the market
 - g. Customer and design requirements including ease of use, aesthetics, value points, various options; sound control, energy conservation, own versus rent, window sizes dictated by others. A solution that may work for a product in a smaller size may not work for the same product in a larger size.
 - h. Two channels of distribution (custom- made to order and in-stock)
- 7) Linda Kaiser asked why the term “minimize” instead of “eliminate” has been used. Ralph indicated that elimination is the goal but as an association, not sure all risks can be eliminated and they need to be realistic in terms of the unknowns that they may find while going through the process. Linda asked that the top-down-bottom-up shades to be included and Ralph said that they would look at all product categories.
 - 8) Ken Powell from British Blinds and Shades Association stated that he has been the convener for the CEN group in Europe for 18 years. They have been working extremely hard on the child safety aspects of the standard in the last few months. He indicated that there are certain differences between the ANSI and CEN standards. CEN has either performance requirements which are voluntary and in addition, essential (mandatory) requirements with a force of law. The ANSI standard is very comprehensive in terms of identification of the hazard and with the test procedures and the mechanical solutions to these hazards. In Europe, they have been examining very closely the US standard. He asked the reason of the statement in the foreword that indicates that WCMA disclaims liability for any personal injury, property, or other damages of any nature resulting from the publication, use of, or reliance on the document. He said that they cannot do this in Europe. Ralph responded that the voluntary nature of the standard refers to the process by which it is adopted and developed and does not address if manufacturers need to comply. He said that he can get a better answer afterwards.
 - 9) CPSC Chairman Inez Tenenbaum made her remarks. She referred to the one-death-a-month statistic which has not changed for many years. New and vastly improved standards, repair kits for recalled products, and education are three keys to prevention. She is looking for a full commitment to eliminating the risk of strangulation by designing out the risks from window coverings and a full stakeholder participation. She said that if new design ideas and consumer advocacy input are respected and incorporated into the new standard, then the new standard has a real chance of widespread support. She said that the working groups are well positioned to come up with outstanding proposals for the steering committee. CPSC supports the work that starts today and she is looking forward to celebrating the development of a new lifesaving window covering standard in October 2011.
 - 10) Ian Brody from Canadian Standards Association indicated that they will have a technical committee meeting on November 25th to go through a planning process and decide what parts of the current ANSI standard they may adopt.
 - 11) Shannon Whittle from Health Canada said that they have regulations regarding the window coverings which have been adopted with modifications from WCMA/ANSI 2007 version of the standard. The agency monitors the market place, pursues voluntary recalls, and conducts public education campaigns. Since 1986, a total of 26 window covering related incidents were reported. They issued a public consultation regarding roman shade inner cords and roll-up blinds. The results of the public consultation will be posted on HC website in the near future.

- 12) Cinzia Missiroli from CEN said that they are collaborating with EU commission regarding the revision of the European standard. Safety requirements (mandate) are expected soon. The industry in Europe is very proactive and working very hard to find solutions to the problem and safer standards. They are open and willing to continue the collaboration with US and Canada to find a global or a similar solution.
- 13) Ken Powell indicated that they have been working on a double campaign for public education. UK is by far the largest market for internal blinds in Europe. This inevitably means that they had more tragedies. In Spain, Italy, France and Germany, although they account for 2/3 of the European population, there have been no strangulation incidents. In UK, they have been pursuing a broadly based program along with General Product Safety representatives together with major consumer safety associations. They called a meeting of major retailers and are sponsoring a campaign called "Make It Safe". As chair of internal blind group, he feels that in technical matters they have the full support from all member states who regularly attend the meetings. It must be understood the difference in the incidents in many countries in Europe and US. They have been working with CEN on the General Product Safety Directive proposal, which will be finalized this month, prior to the International Safety Week on December 2nd. He echoed the words of Ralph, CPSC Chairman, and others that they must design our way out of the problem. Cordless should be the aim. They have already many examples of blinds which are being brought to the attention of the buying public. There will always be a hazard regarding corded products. Therefore, it is only by design a final solution will be found.
- 14) Ralph mentioned that the threefold approach including safety standards, education, and retrofit kits. WCSC (Window Covering Safety Council) aims to engage in public education and awareness in many ways. WCSC distributes over 10,000 repair kits per month to consumers free of charge.
- 15) Agnieszka Jarmula from EU Delegation indicated that EU Commission is preparing a formal decision to request CEN to revise the safety standards on EN 13120 standard. The current standard has to be revised to include Roman shades. The standard relies on product information and safety devices. Safety devices are not being installed and warnings are not getting the attention of the consumer. Their objective is to set a performance requirement which makes the product inherently safe and if safety devices are needed, the product should not operate unless the safety devices are installed. Goal is to test the product and safety devices together. Proper risk assessment in the behavior of children should be considered. She also said that ANEC, the European Association for the Coordination of Consumer Representation, is regularly involved in the decision making process and consulted in equal footing with member states and CEN.
- 16) Bob Ochsman, Director of Human Factors Division at CPSC made his remarks. The staff is pleased with the WCMA's goal to draft a standard ready for balloting by the end of October 2011. The outlined framework and the process are logical and allow continuous communication by all stakeholders.
- 17) Renae Rauchschalbe introduced several inventions¹ that address the operating cords and looped cords. Linda Kaiser, founder of Parents for Window Blind Safety, demonstrated a prototype invented by Robert Nevins. The product deals with beaded chains and uses a wand that is placed in the loop where the looped chain is on the sides. Her impression after talking to various manufacturers and installers is that the tie-down devices are not preferred and installers usually do what is necessary to please the consumer. Second prototype was introduced by inventors Ron and Apryl Bossler. The prototype seals conventional operating cords in a slider mechanism. Third demonstration was by Kenney Manufacturing. The Roman shade product has a wand which twists to raise and lower the

¹ Note that CPSC does not endorse products.

shade. The fourth demonstration was by Safe-T-Shade. They have a wand that encloses the looped bead chain. Their second product hides the conventional operating cords in a wand.

- 18) Derick Marsh from RollEase asked why other systems weren't shown and what the process is to have the solutions evaluated. Renae Rauchschalbe responded that he can contact her for evaluation of products by CPSC. She also said that CPSC staff asked Ralph to communicate with the members to see if there was any interest from other companies/inventors to demonstrate their products at the meeting. Joe Cannaverde from RollEase asked that a better communication needs to be made. Ralph said that he would make a better job in the future.
- 19) Derick Marsh asked what happens on December 4th if manufacturers make a non-compliant Roman shade. Ralph said that for those items, December 4th is the manufacturer's compliance date. WCMA has no enforcement authority. Renae Rauchschalbe said that they will make a decision on when the products should be off-the-shelves and there will be guidance by December.

Action Items:

WCMA is to send out the information on the make-up of the working groups and steering committee; the dates for the future steering committee meetings, which will start in December 2010.