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MEETING LOG
DIRECTORATE FOR ENGINEERING SCIENCES

SUBJECT: Industry Activities to Address Water Heater Ignition of Flammable Vapors

PLACE: John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel, Reno, NV

MEETING DATE: August 8-9, 1995

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Donald W. Switzer DWS

ENTRY DATE: August 28, 1995

COMMISSION ATTENDEES:

Donald W. Switzer ES

NON-COMMISSION ATTENDEES:

See attached attendance sheet

MEETING SUMMARY

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Flammable Vapor Ignition was formed by the Gas Research Institute (GRI) to provide technical oversight of the development of a test methodology to screen water heater resistance to igniting flammable vapors. The methodology will be provided to the ANSI Z21 water heater subcommittee and others for use in developing a standard test method for flammable vapor ignition resistance. The TAG consists of a number of experts representing the gas-fired water heater manufacturing industry, the natural gas utilities, GRI's Research and Development staff, and the CPSC. The methodology is being developed by Arthur D. Little, Inc., (ADL) under contract to GRI.

The purpose of this meeting was to provide the TAG with an opportunity for technical review and comment on the approach ADL has suggested for the test methodology. ADL has completed construction of the test facility and initiated shakedown testing to confirm that a flammable butane/air mixture can be introduced into the test chamber to produce vapor concentration profiles comparable to those measured in gasoline spill testing. Results indicate that the system can be used to mimic the conditions resulting from a gasoline spill. Preliminary test results also indicate that when a current technology water heater is tested, vapor ignition in the test facility occurred in the same general time frame as in the gasoline spill tests.

The next step in the test method development is to verify that water heaters known not to cause ignition in a gasoline



spill do not cause ignition in the test facility. In order to perform this verification, prototypes of ignition resistant water heaters will be supplied from the manufacturers when they are available.

After discussion, the consensus of the TAG was that the test methodology is not sufficiently developed to forward it to the voluntary standards groups at this time. Once the method is verified with new-design water heaters, a determination will be made as to the appropriateness of release.

Staff believes that progress is satisfactory at this time.

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