



UNITED STATES
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
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ACTING CHAIRMAN ROBERT ADLER

Statement of Acting Chairman Robert Adler on Passage of 2021 Mid-Year One Plan

March 25, 2021

*"The true measure of any society can be found in
how it treats its most vulnerable members." – Gandhi*

I am so pleased by the Commission's passage of the first of our two-part 2021 Mid-Year Plan today. As I see it, Mid-Year One clarifies CPSC's strong and ongoing commitment to diversity and equity in all aspects of our mission. In effect, this plan approves enhanced efforts for developing specific approaches that identify and address product hazards disproportionately affecting minority communities and underserved populations. In particular, I want to thank my colleagues Commissioner Kaye and Commissioner Baiocco for their votes to reinforce that commitment.

I have been affiliated with CPSC in one way or another since it began operations in 1973. In that time, I have seen a radical growth in our understanding of hazards and how to deal with them—including the knowledge that not all people experience the same safety risks; not all people respond to the same safety messages; and not all people have the ability to protect themselves and their families from products that pose unreasonable risks. This awareness that culture, race, age, socio-economic status, and even religion bear a relationship to consumer product safety is fundamental to the success of our mission.

Consider, for a moment, the family living in low-income housing who cannot anchor their dresser to the wall because they aren't permitted by the terms of their lease.

Or, the devout family observing the Sabbath who, prohibited from lighting a flame, use a hot plate to keep food warm.

Picture the young mother living in a multi-generational household whose grandmother admonishes her to put her new baby to sleep on her stomach or in the bed, "just as they did in the old days."

Or, the father who, embarrassed that he can't pay his utility bill, uses a portable generator inside the garage—out of view, but at great risk to the household.

Consider, too, the elderly woman living alone, thoughts dimmed by dementia, who mistakes laundry packets for medicine.

Finally, imagine the young, non-English speaking couple who lovingly leave their child at a home daycare that uses recalled infant inclined sleepers.

There are so many stories—as many as there are differences among the American people. And it is our job, our privilege, to try to protect all of them from unsafe products. Today’s vote affirms this responsibility, and clarifies how the agency intends to reach those diverse consumers via projects ranging from data analysis to communications, including:

- Safety equity studies to determine whether there are specific areas of risk within ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and other diverse populations that face more danger from our highest-risk product categories;
- Safety education materials to ensure authenticity and full representation for vulnerable populations;
- Language and disability access to make the work of the CPSC available to all consumers, regardless of English proficiency, deafness, blindness, or other barriers to involvement; and
- Safety campaigns specifically designed to speak to the unique risks and needs of diverse and vulnerable populations.

In short, today’s vote demonstrates that CPSC recognizes the diversity of the American people and is committed to tailoring our work to meet those people where they are. At the same time, our Mid-Year Two plan is designed to improve the safety of imports, upholstered furniture, portable fuel containers, carbon monoxide detectors, and other worthy projects that Congress has directed us to focus on in the coming year. I specifically look forward to leveraging the dollars allocated in the American Rescue Plan to address product risks arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am eager to see our staff recommendations on how to maximize that work, beginning next week. There is more to be done, and we need more resources to do it.

But as a threshold matter, as a core, fundamental imperative, we must understand that our mission is not complete if it does not reflect an explicit commitment to reaching all consumers, of all colors, creeds, and cultures. Today’s vote affirms that, going forward, all of our safety work will be scaffolded by this knowledge, and strengthened by the insights to come.