

**LOG OF MEETING
DIRECTORATE FOR HEALTH SCIENCES**

SUBJECT: CPSC staff meeting with That Water Bead Lady

PRODUCT: Water beads

DATE OF MEETING: February 24, 2023

PLACE OF MEETING: Virtual/Teleconference

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Ashley Johnson (HSPP)

COMMISSION ATTENDEES: Ashley Johnson (HSPP), Mary Kelleher (HS), Stef Marques (HSPP), Suad Wanna-Nakamura (HSPP), Eric Hooker (HSTR), Khalisa Phillips (ESHF), Jill Hurley (ESHF), Matt Kresse (LSM), Michael Nelson (LSM), Carol Afflerbach (CRE), Stephanie Bragg (EPA)

NON-COMMISSION ATTENDEES: Ashley Haugen (That Water Bead Lady), Nancy Cowles (Kids in Danger), Crystal Ellis (Consumer advocate and Parents Against Tip-overs), Rachel Weintraub (Coalition for Sensible Safeguards), Neal Cohen (Neal Cohen Law LLC), Alan Kaufman (The Toy Association, Inc.), Jos Huxley (The Toy Association, Inc.), Moiz Mumtaz (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry)

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

CPSC Health Sciences staff and other CPSC staff met publicly with Ashley Haugen, President and Founder of That Water Bead Lady. The topic of the meeting was water beads, and the meeting was requested by Ashley Haugen.

The meeting opened with introductions, CPSC staff then followed by outside attendees. Ashley Haugen introduced herself and recounted the story of her daughter's water bead injury. Her daughter swallowed a water bead in 2017, which required surgery and a hospital stay to resolve a bowel obstruction. Her daughter also developed a rash and neurological issues. She outlined her symptoms following the hospital stay, including a reappearing rash, additional neurological symptoms, and diagnosis of Toxic Brain Encephalopathy caused by acrylamide monomer poisoning, expressive and receptive language delay, gait abnormality, muscle coordination issues, muscle weakness, and elevated risk for autism.

Ashley Haugen then went on to describe important points about safety issues of water beads. The beads were purchased for an older sibling, who was supervised while playing, but she explains that no parental supervision can fully prevent water bead ingestion and that water bead injuries also happen outside of the home in school settings. In the case of Ashley Haugen's daughter, the ingestion was unwitnessed, which delayed medical care. She shared a brief synopsis of three other children that suffered water bead injuries, including two ingestions and an aspiration, that required medical care. She explained issues in medical diagnosis of water bead injuries,

including unlisted ingredients or no warning labels on packaging, difficulty of water beads to be detected on medical imaging, and a lack of medical training and awareness on injury risk.

Ashley Haugen then described her own research on medical literature and her own medical knowledge surrounding acrylamide exposure, the creation of her advocacy organization, That Water Bead Lady, and recent media attention on water beads. She explained that although polyacrylamide is considered non-toxic, it is created by polymerizing acrylamide. She explained that the polymerization process is never 100%, and residual acrylamide monomers exist as a contaminant in polyacrylamide. She explained that there is no limit on acrylamide residue in these products.

Ashley Haugen responded to questions from meeting attendees. A meeting attendee spoke as a member of ASTM and felt the mechanical requirements of F963 regarding expansive size are effective if the product is compliant with the standard. He agreed that issues regarding toxicity may not be addressed in the standard. He also mentioned that there are several products of water beads that are outside of the scope of the standard and not considered toys so it may be necessary to go after those non-toy products. Another meeting attendee also spoke as a member of ASTM and provided F963 rationale info, including testing information and performance requirements. A meeting attendee asked Ashley Haugen to elaborate on the acrylamide exposure aspect of the water bead injury.

Staff concluded the meeting by asking Ashley Haugen if she had any final remarks. She commented that there's no reason to market water beads as toys and, if they are marketed as toys, they can be made of other types of safer ingredients, including food.