



U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207

MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETING

July 29, 1994

4330 East West Highway
Bethesda, Maryland

The July 29, 1994, meeting of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission was convened in open session by Chairman Ann Brown. Commissioner Mary Sheila Gall and Commissioner Jacqueline Jones-Smith were present.

Agenda Item: Bicycle Helmets

The Commission was briefed by the staff on a draft proposed safety standard for bicycle helmets that would implement the Children's Bicycle Helmet Safety Act of 1994. The proposed standard would require bicycle helmets to meet impact-attenuation and other requirements, including requirements specifically applicable to children's helmets and requirements to prevent helmets from coming off during an accident. (Ref: staff briefing package dated July 19, 1994.)

Following the staff briefing, the Commission moved to a vote on the proposed rule. On motion of Chairman Brown, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the draft Federal Register notice at Tab E of the July 19, 1994, briefing package, proposing a safety standard for bicycle helmets.

Chairman Brown, Commissioner Gall, and Commissioner Jones-Smith filed separate statements concerning the bicycle helmet matter, copies of which are attached.

For the Commission:

Sadye E. Dunn
Secretary

Attachments

UNITED STATES
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
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The Chairman

Statement of Chairman Ann Brown
Bicycle Helmets

July 29, 1994

This morning the Commission voted unanimously to propose a mandatory standard for bicycle helmets. I consider this to be an extremely important regulation and an appropriate activity for the Commission to undertake. It is important that consumers who purchase bicycle helmets are assured that the helmets meet at least a minimal level of safety. The proposed rule would establish a single mandatory performance standard that harmonizes provisions included in three separate voluntary standards.

Nearly one-third of the estimated one-half million bicycle-related injuries treated annually in hospital emergency rooms involve the head/face area. About one-fourth of the head injuries involve potentially serious diagnoses including fractures, internal injuries and concussions.

Children, an especially vulnerable population, are at particular risk of head injury. About one-half of the injuries to children under the age of ten involved the head and face.

According to CPSC staff, published research indicates that helmets may reduce the risk of injury to bicyclists by about 85 percent, and the risk of brain injury by about 88 percent.

Regardless of any bicycle helmet standard issued by the Commission consumers must still wear a helmet to be protected. Parents and caregivers in particular must assure that their children have helmets and wear them.



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**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MARY SHEILA GALL
ON
PROPOSED SAFETY STANDARD FOR BICYCLE HELMETS**

JULY 29, 1994

Today the Commission has voted to issue a proposed safety standard for bicycle helmets in accordance with the Children's Bicycle Safety Helmet Act of 1994. I look forward to receiving comments from the public on this matter.

This new law is intended to serve as a catalyst in raising awareness of the dangers of riding a bicycle without a helmet. Parents and other caregivers must take responsibility for ensuring that the children in their care are protected by helmets when they are riding bicycles.

**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER JACQUELINE JONES-SMITH
CONCERNING A PROPOSED SAFETY STANDARD
FOR BICYCLE HELMETS**

JULY 29, 1994

Today I voted to approve publication of a Federal Register Notice with respect to establishing a safety standard, as well as certain certification and recordkeeping rules, for children's bicycle helmets. This action was mandated by the Children's Bicycle Helmet Safety Act of 1994.

As I have stated in the past, bicycle safety is an issue that warrants the closest societal scrutiny. Data clearly indicates that bicycle riding is both a popular and hazardous activity. Annually, an estimated half million bicycle-related injuries are treated in hospital emergency rooms. More compelling is the fact that approximately 1000 cyclists per year die as a consequence of bicycle-related incidents.

That helmet usage is effective is supported by our data. About one third of the cited incidents involve injuries to the head and face, while over two thirds of bicycle-related deaths result from such injuries. Children appear to be particularly susceptible to head and face injuries, with data showing that about one half of all injuries involving children under the age of ten are to the head and face. The tragic irony is that studies indicate that helmet usage can reduce head and face injuries by about 85%.

Unfortunately, however, helmets are worn by only a small percentage of cyclists. A CPSC exposure study, published in 1993, indicates that only about 18% of cyclists use helmets. This number, however small, is encouraging since just two years before we estimated that only about 6% of cyclists were wearing helmets.

It can be surmised that this increase is a result of a combination of public education and a greater sensitivity on the part of cyclists to the importance of helmet use; as well as local laws mandating helmet use -- particularly for children. Indeed, it has been such local efforts, of varying types, that have been most instrumental in arousing public awareness of this issue. Our greatest challenge remains promoting increased usage of these safety devices. This Commission remains committed to such efforts.

I remain skeptical, however, as to the utility of the legislative mandate directing these regulatory activities. I also am concerned about the wisdom of requiring this Commission to expend its limited resources on rulemaking and enforcement activities that hold out little promise of reducing deaths and injuries. There are a number of existing voluntary standards governing the manufacture and design of bicycle helmets. We have no data to indicate that any of these standards are inadequate in protecting cyclists from head and face injuries. In fact, on the contrary, these standards have proven to be very effective in reducing head injuries. The problem is not with the helmets; but rather with the people who do not use them. Nonetheless, I understand and respect the right of Congress to enact such legislation and will act accordingly in implementing this law.