



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

Statement of
Chairman Jacqueline Jones-Smith
on
Heat Tape Petition
July 26, 1990

On July 26, 1990, the Commission voted unanimously to deny the petition from Christian B. Stegeman and others, requesting the Commission to issue a safety standard for electric heat tapes.

The staff estimates that there are more than 20 million heat tapes in use today. The staff estimates further that during the years 1985 through 1987, heat tapes were associated with an average of twenty deaths and 160 injuries annually. Heat tapes appear to present a problem that warrants further study by the Commission. In fact, the Commission has already decided to begin a hazard project on heat tapes in Fiscal Year 1991.

I voted to deny the petition because it is unclear whether a mandatory standard is reasonably necessary to eliminate or reduce a risk of injury associated with heat tapes. The Commission staff at this time does not fully know why heat tapes are failing, how to correct them, what the cost of correction might be, whether the instructions are the problem, or whether the voluntary standards are adequate. In addition, it appears that at the present time changes are occurring in the heat tape industry. The Commission has received information from the industry that it plans to manufacture heat tapes conforming to the Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Canadian, or Factory Mutual Standard. The staff has not yet had an opportunity to collect data or conduct the technical work necessary to fully assess the problem. Until that work is done, a decision cannot be made on whether a standard is reasonably necessary to reduce a risk of injury associated with heat tapes.