



U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
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**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER ANNE M. NORTHUP ON THE FINAL RULE FOR
INFANT BATH SEATS**

May 19, 2010

Today's vote for the Infant Bath Seats Final Rule reflects the unanimous view of the Commissioners that the mandatory standard it has adopted for infant bath seats is reasonable and appropriate. Section 104 of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) requires the Commission to adopt mandatory standards for durable infant products at the rate of two product categories every six months. The Infant Bath Seats Final Rule is the first of many and represents a well-thought-out standard.

However, today's rule alone will not have a substantial impact on the genuine risk and often recurring tragedy of children under the age of five drowning in bathtubs. Approximately seventy-five young children drown each year in bathtubs.¹ Most of the reported fatalities regarding submersion deaths of these children appear to involve a parent or guardian who steps away from the tub briefly, discounting the very real danger that a fatal submersion can happen in the blink of an eye.

Of the incident reports of bathtub drownings, only a small percentage of them involve a bath seat. Given the data, it is possible that the use of a bath seat reduces the likelihood of a child's drowning in a bathtub. However, it is also possible that the use of a bath seat may increase the risk of drowning simply by providing the parent with a false sense of security that the child will be temporarily safe if he/she briefly walks away.

As a Commissioner at the Consumer Product Safety Commission, one quickly becomes aware of what circumstances present the most serious and frequent risks to families and, in particular, to children. I believe the Commission should spend more time and resources addressing these types of categorical dangers, even if they are not directly related to a specific consumer product. In that regard, the mandate of section 104 that the Commission issue mandatory standards for durable nursery products presents an opportunity for us also to focus more attention on the overarching hazards that could impact any infant, such as drowning during bathing.

I agree with my fellow Commissioners that the larger, underappreciated hazard associated with bathing an infant or leaving a baby near water in any circumstance cannot be overstated. For that reason, I hope the Commission will pursue a campaign warning of the dangers of leaving an infant unattended in a bathtub, even if only for a moment. Such a campaign would likely save more lives than will publishing this final rule.

¹ Submersions Related to Non-Pool and Non-Spa Products, 2009 Report.
<http://www.cpsc.gov/library/foia/foia10/os/nonpoolsub2009.pdf>

Chairman Tenenbaum has made it one of her goals to expand the Commission's education and informational programs, in particular by initiating the agency's creation of "CPSC 2.0" - our social media initiative, which reaches tens of thousands of consumers and makes lifesaving information available to millions of online users. We also have seen tremendous success with the "Back to Sleep" campaign, saving infants' lives by creating a safer sleep environment for children across the country.

I am convinced a similar, effective campaign regarding the deadly threat of leaving young children unattended during baths would save lives. The creative use of social media can significantly expand our efforts to protect children without costly investments.

I appreciate the hard work of our Office of Public Affairs in creating and promoting all of our safety initiatives, and I am enthusiastic about the potential to expand on the agency's success and begin another nationwide campaign that would save babies' lives.