



U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20207

Alan H. Schoem
Director
Office of Compliance

Tel: 301-504-0621, Ext. 1349
Fax: 301-504-0008
email: aschoem@cpsc.gov
Direct Dial: 301-504-0684

November 25, 2002

Importers and Manufacturers of Hair Dryers

Re: Hand Held Electric Hair Dryers

Dear Sir or Madam:

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent federal regulatory agency responsible for protecting consumers from unreasonable risks of injury and death from consumer products. Our authority is set forth in the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA), 15 U.S.C. § 2051 -2084.

I understand there may be confusion in your industry with respect to supplying immersion protection devices on all your firm's hand-held hair dryers. I am therefore writing this letter to clarify the position of the CPSC staff on this issue and to urge you to assure that hair dryers you import, manufacture, distribute or sell in the United States offer immersion protection in both the switch "on" and switch "off" position.

In January 1991, Underwriters Laboratories' (UL) standard took effect that required UL certified hand-held hair dryers to prevent electrocution if the hair dryer is dropped in water in either the switch "on" or switch "off" position. This followed a requirement in the National Electrical Code (Article 422-24, 1990 edition) for protection against electrocution when these dryers are immersed. Before these changes, about 18 consumers were electrocuted each year in the United States when a hand-held hair dryer was immersed in water. In 2000, the last year for which CPSC has complete records, there was only one electrocution. This dramatic reduction in deaths shows why hair dryers must provide immersion protection.

Inasmuch as the National Electrical Code and UL's standards have been in place for many years, the CPSC staff considers hair dryers available for sale to or use by consumers that do not prevent electrocution when dropped in water to be defective and to present a substantial

product hazard. However, some firms continue to import or manufacture for sale in the United States hair dryers that do not conform to these nationally recognized standards. This has led to more than 15 CPSC recalls of such hair dryers.

Some firms market hand held hair dryers that they contend are intended for professional use only, that is, for use by professionals in hair salons. However, the staff also considers “professional” hair dryers that are available for sale to consumers and that fail to provide immersion protection to be defective and to present a substantial product hazard. Should the staff encounter such products, it will seek a recall. We note that there is no persuasive reason for such hair dryers to lack immersion protection, since the UL standard for commercial hand-held hair dryers require immersion protection similar to the household models.

In view of the foregoing, I urge you to review your product line and assure that you offer immersion protection on all of your hand-held electric hair dryers. The CPSC staff will follow-up as appropriate in the future to assure that firms are meeting their obligations in this area.

If you have any questions or we can be of any assistance, you may contact Robert Moro, Senior Compliance Officer, at 973 857-7022 or rmoro@cpsc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alan H. Schoem". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan H. Schoem