U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Log of Meeting

Subject: Amusement Rides and Devices

Date of meeting: November 15, 2006

Log Entry Source: Thomas E. Caton, ESME

Location: CPSC Headquarters

CPSC Attendees:

Thomas E. Caton, ESME
Mark E. Kumagai, ESME
Hugh McLaurin, ES
Tim Smith, ESHF
Gib Mullan, EXC
Valery Ceasar, CRC
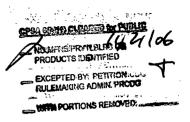Richard Stern, CPSC
Jason Goldsmith, HSHS

Non-CPSC Attendees:

Kathy Fackler, Saferparks
Michael Reitz, Six Flags, Inc.
Sean Oberle, Product Safety Newsletter
Garreth Donovan, Williams & Jensen

Summary of Meeting:

The meeting began at about 9:30 am.

Ms. Fackler had requested to meet with CPSC staff to discuss voluntary standards including age, height, maturity limit requirements, and signage or ride instructions for amusement rides. Ms. Fackler expressed her concern that basing ride usage on age or height can present difficulties, i.e., the maturity of a child who is tall for their age or a mature person who is short stature. Height requirements are easy to measure but cannot be used to differentiate a seven year old child from a six year old child. Height has been used as a proxy selector while age requirements are a footnote in ride selection. Ms. Fackler said there is an age/height gap and if height is the primary marker then age should be added as a design factor. The criteria used to determine the age and height requirements are a voluntary standard subject discussed by the ASTM Committee F24 on Amusement Rides. ASTM Committee F24 work is a slow process.

Restraint systems are another factor that can vary. Examples of a variety of restraint systems used are: gondola type rides have no seat restraint, while the seats of some whirling rides have a lap bar but no seat belts, and yet other rides use cage containment. Ms. Fackler presented a listing of parameters for determining restraint requirements that had been agreed to at a May 8, 2006 meeting at SeaWorld that included: acceleration, height, velocity, intensity [panic factor], and a parameter number for determining the needed restraint type. Other factors are multiple riders; several children of different sizes or a child and an adult riding in the same car meaning that one size-for-all restraint may not fit all situations. Photographs of some Australian rides and American rides were compared to show the higher level of restraint used on some Australian rides. This included fully enclosed gondolas and breaking up a seat so there is no long seat.

The group discussed the issues of updating older rides that are grandfathered. Mr. Reitz said that if Six Flags adjusts one ride at one park then all similar rides at all of their parks get adjusted. In addition, Six Flags will inform their competitors with similar rides so that they are aware for their rides. This works for fixed site rides at multiple sites under one company's ownership, but this may be more difficult for independent ride owners of mobile rides to make changes.

Another factor is children being left at parks for the day without an adult supervising or making ride decisions for them.

Ms. Fackler believes that there can be a complex interplay of issues such as fully enclosed rides, latching restraints, ride accompaniment, i.e. kids riding with kids. Ms. Fackler believes there should be more engineering for the work load on a child when riding with an adult. What latching system is appropriate?

Ms. Fackler believes that carnival operators should provide carnival operators should provide more information to adult carnival patrons concerning safety on rides – the types of publicly available information that may be provided to ride owners, but may not trickle down to that actual patrons and specifically adults who need to make judgment calls about whether a ride is appropriate for their child. Ms. Fackler is developing a sharing source to provide ride information for ride users to "…to learn more about the causes and patterns of preventable amusement ride injury." This source uses public documents and is available as a "work in progress' web site at www.ridesdatabase.org.

The meeting ended about 11:30 am.

cc: Hugh McLaurin, ES
        Mark Kumagai, ESME
        EXPA
        EXHR
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