



# **CPSC CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS**

**HOTLINE**

**CLEARINGHOUSE**

**STATE PARTNERS**

**U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission  
Office of Planning and Evaluation  
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## **Executive Summary**

The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent federal regulatory agency that was created in 1972 by Congress in the Consumer Product Safety Act. In that law, Congress directed the Commission to “protect the public against unreasonable risks of injuries and deaths associated with consumer products.”

One way that CPSC works to reduce the risks of injuries and deaths from consumer products is by informing and educating consumers and by responding to consumer inquiries. The Hotline, National Injury Information Clearinghouse, and State Partners program disseminate information to the American public and respond to consumer requests for information.

CPSC has service quality and customer satisfaction strategic goals under the Government Performance and Results Act to sustain the current satisfaction of consumers with CPSC’s Hotline and Clearinghouse, and the states with CPSC’s State Partners program. This report evaluates how well we are meeting this goal as measured through surveys.

Based on the results of the surveys, we are substantively meeting our general satisfaction goal of 90% for the Hotline, Clearinghouse and State Partners program. These results compare favorably with the results of recent customer satisfaction surveys at other Federal agencies, which showed customer satisfaction ratings ranging from 70% to 81%. Comparisons of the results of these CPSC surveys to previous CPSC surveys showed statistically significant differences in areas of each program, including satisfaction with the Hotline recorded messages, the timeliness of information from the Clearinghouse, and the awareness of an agreement with state partners. These differences indicate areas for potential improvement for these services.

## **Introduction**

The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent federal regulatory agency that was created in 1972 by Congress in the Consumer Product Safety Act. In that law, Congress directed the Commission to “protect the public against unreasonable risks of injuries and deaths associated with consumer products.” The CPSC has jurisdiction over about 15,000 types of consumer products, from coffee makers to toys to lawn mowers.

One of the ways CPSC works to reduce the risk of injuries and deaths from consumer products is by informing and educating consumers through the media, state and local governments, private organizations, and by responding to consumer inquiries. The CPSC has services/programs that inform the public on consumer products that include the Hotline, National Injury Information Clearinghouse, and State Partners program.

Through CPSC’s toll-free Hotline consumers can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to file a complaint about an unsafe product, get product safety or recall information, get information on what to look for when buying a consumer product, or ask for a publication. The Clearinghouse gives information and statistics relating to death and injury associated with consumer products. Information specialists in the Clearinghouse search agency databases to tailor responses to each customer’s needs. The State Partners program was established to promote Federal-State cooperation for the purposes of carrying out the Consumer Product Safety Act.

A requirement of the Government Performance and Results Act is to develop strategic goals. One of the Commission’s service quality and customer satisfaction strategic goals is to sustain the current satisfaction of consumers with CPSC’s Hotline and Clearinghouse, and the states with CPSC’s State Partners program. These services and programs have each established customer service standards, some of which may be measured by surveying consumers. This report presents the findings of the survey evaluations conducted by CPSC’s Office of Planning and Evaluation. We compare these results to those from previous evaluations, and provide recommendations based on those survey results.

## Hotline

### Methodology

A mail survey of Hotline callers was conducted from July 23 to September 12, 2002. Over this period, callers who provided their addresses to CPSC staff either because they filed a complaint about a potentially hazardous product, requested information, or asked to be put on a mailing list were randomly selected to be mailed a survey. Of the 364 callers who were selected to be mailed the surveys, 229 (65%) returned the questionnaires and 9 were returned as undeliverable. During the mail survey period, CPSC issued forty-one news releases, thirty-seven of which were recalls, and the Hotline received 19,177 calls.

The survey results are in Appendix A. Further details of the methodology are described in Appendix B.

### Findings

CPSC set a strategic goal for customer satisfaction with the Hotline of 90%. The survey results show that we met that goal with a general satisfaction of 91%.

The general satisfaction distribution results are shown in Figure 1.

- The results in Figure 1 show a high level of satisfaction with the Hotline with approximately 91% of the respondents either satisfied or very satisfied with the way the Hotline worked. As shown in the figure, over twice as many respondents were very satisfied (63%) than satisfied (28%). Of those satisfied, according to their comments they were grateful for the service. Some comments were:
  - “I think the Hotline is a very good idea because it helps to keep my children safe.”
  - “Keep up the great service you're providing.”
  - “Thanks for all the info; it makes my job easier.”
  - “Staff person was kind and helpful. I appreciate this wonderful service and hope it will continue.”
  - “This is a very important service that you provide!”
  - “Staff person was very courteous and knowledgeable on the publication I requested and expedited my order promptly. Thanks!”
  - “Continue to be America's first homeland security agency.”

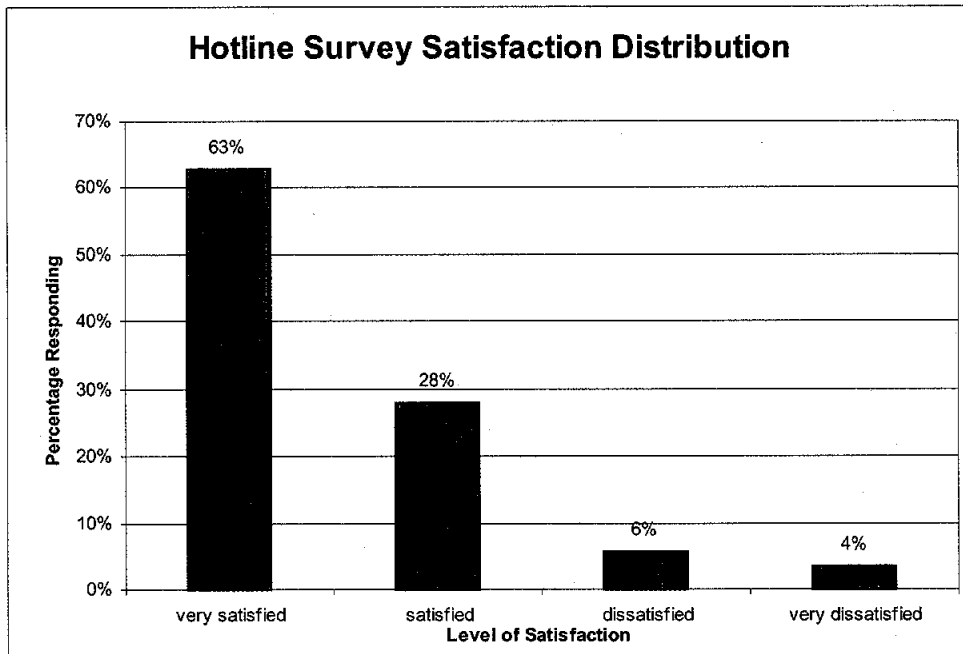


Figure 1

A small percentage was dissatisfied (6%) or very dissatisfied (4%). The dissatisfaction identified in the survey may have been due in part to so many numbers/extensions to wade through on the pre-recorded messages. In addition, some customers were dissatisfied because they had not received the materials they had requested, were not satisfied with the materials they had received or had not received an expected follow-up. Some typical comments are as follows:

- "Difficult to know where and how to call."
- "There was no indication as to whether or not I would be informed on the resolution of my complaint or whether the complaint had any merit."
- "Would like to talk with a real person sooner without having to listen to recordings and choose numbers."
- "Would like to receive in writing similar registered complaints and what CPSC has done with info and notifying the company."
- "I am still waiting for the 'package' that was to be sent to me so that I could give you the details about the 'unsafe product.'"
- "I had to call twice because I didn't receive my pamphlets."
- "Your operators need to listen more closely to the complaint information they are being given so they get it right."
- "I was told I would receive a form to fill out but have not received it yet."

Some of the comments from dissatisfied customers appeared to be related to issues outside of the control of the Hotline staff, such as a failure of a manufacturer to resolve a potential problem. The results for the other questions are shown in Figure 2.

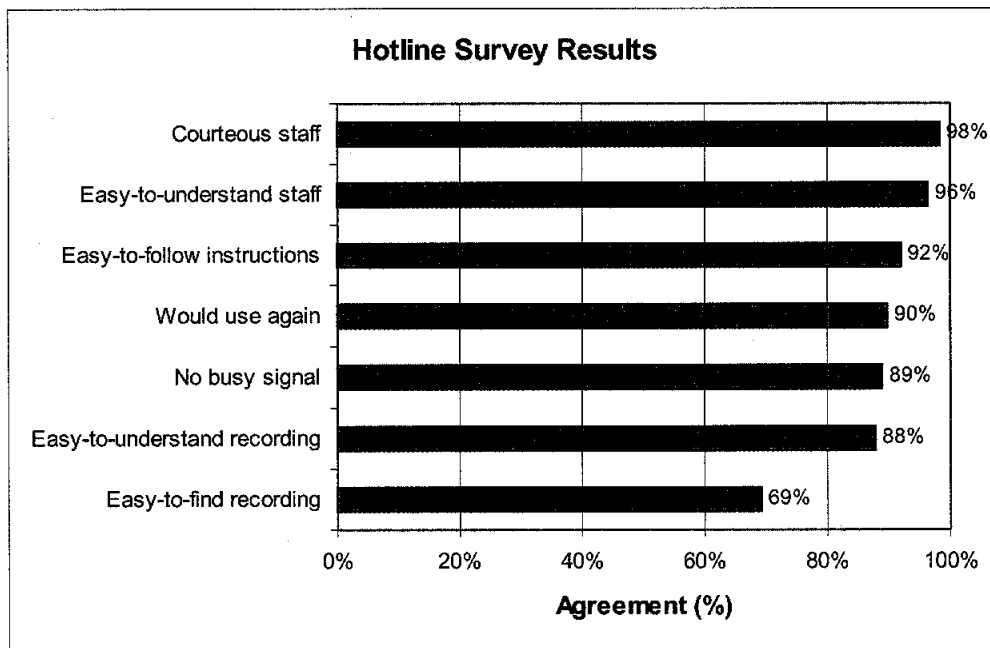


Figure 2

- Most of the respondents were first time users of the Hotline; about 87% of the respondents stated this was the first time they had ever used the Hotline.
- Ninety-eight percent who spoke with staff responded that the Hotline representative was courteous and 96% responded that the information that the Hotline representative gave was easy to understand.
- The pre-recorded instructions on how to use the Hotline were easy to follow according to 92% of the respondents.
- About 90% of the respondents said they would use the Hotline again.
- About 89% of the respondents reported that they did not get a busy signal.
- About 20% of respondents listened to a pre-recorded message. Of these respondents, 69% found the recording easy to find, while 88% found the message easy to understand.

## Comparison to Previous Customer Satisfaction Surveys

The results of this survey were compared to those conducted in 1999 and 1996. The results of that comparison are shown in Figure 3. In the 1996 survey many of the questions were different from those in the 1999 and 2002 surveys – those questions which were similar are presented in the figure.

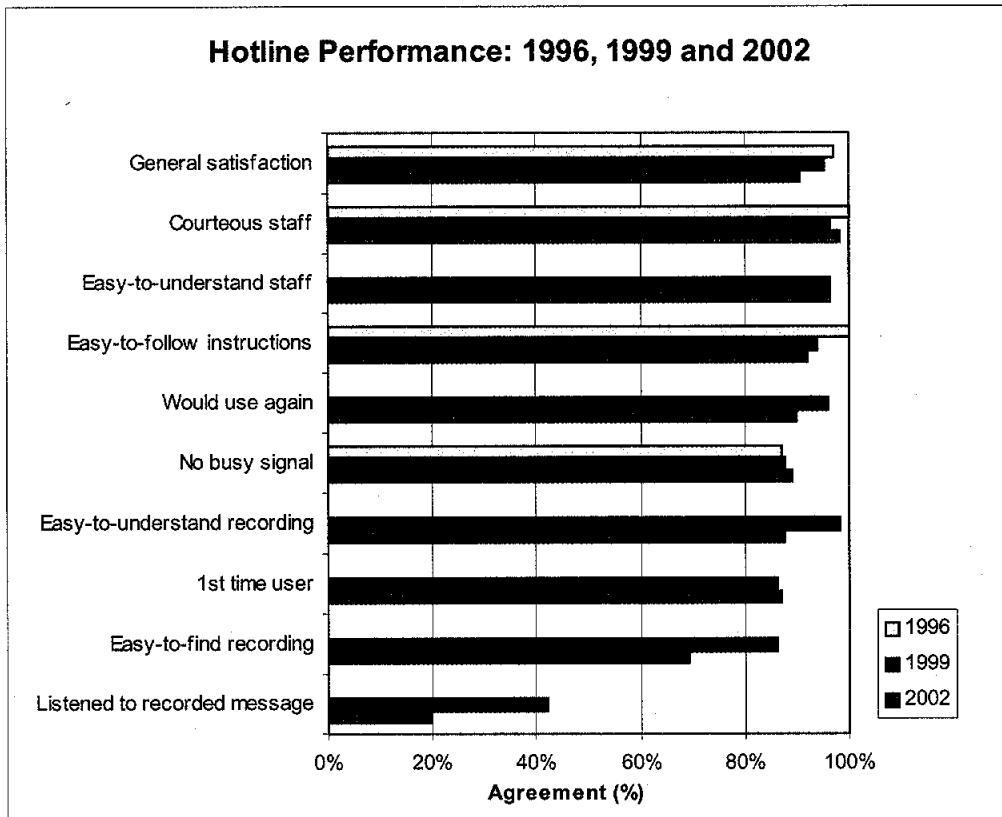


Figure 3

Three questions related to the recorded messages showed a significantly lower performance (using a 5% statistical significance level): the percentage of respondents that listened to a recorded message (42% in 1999, 20% in 2002), the percentage that found the recorded message easy to find (86% in 1999, 69% in 2002) and the percentage that found the recorded message easy to understand (98% in 1999, 88% in 2002). In addition, the number of respondents who would use the system again showed a statistically significant difference from 1999 results (96% in 1999, 90% in 2002). This could also be related to the frustration in finding a recorded message.

Although a large percentage of respondents said that they would use the Hotline again, most of the respondents were first time users (86% in 1999, 87% in 2002). We believe that because most users in our sample called to file a complaint about an unsafe product they may not have a need to call back. In addition, much of the product safety information is available on the CPSC Web site, and this may be the primary source for obtaining this information. However, we are limited



in this survey to those who gave us their name and address and therefore we may only generalize these results to that sample.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, to improve customer satisfaction the Hotline's instructions should be reorganized in a way so it would be easier for callers to find the recorded message that they are looking for. In addition, more effort should be made to set users' expectations about Hotline services, including informing Hotline users more clearly that CPSC might not always provide them with additional or follow-up information regarding their complaint, that the Hotline will not be able to resolve complaints, and that the Hotline will not necessarily perform additional analyses.

## Clearinghouse

### Methodology

We conducted a mail survey for the Clearinghouse from May 30 to June 6, 2002. The survey sample was obtained from requests for information that had been completed in a two month period between March 20 and May 20, 2002; a total of 260 potential respondents were randomly selected for the mail survey. We received 177 (72%) of the mail surveys completed and thirteen were returned as undeliverable.

The complete survey results from the Clearinghouse surveys are in Appendix A. Further details of the methodology are described in Appendix B.

### Findings

CPSC set a strategic goal for customer satisfaction with the Clearinghouse of 90%. The survey results showed a general satisfaction result of 88%. The general satisfaction level of 88% is not significantly different from the 90% customer satisfaction goal, based on a statistical test.

The general satisfaction distribution results are shown in Figure 4.

- Respondents had a very high level of satisfaction with the Clearinghouse and with the staff, as seen in Figure 4. For overall general satisfaction, 88% of mail survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the way the Clearinghouse worked. There were nearly twice as many respondents who were very satisfied (57%) than were satisfied (31%). Most respondents that were very satisfied or satisfied responded that it was a good service, the staff was helpful, or the response was quick. Some comments include the following:
  - “You consistently maintain fast and accurate service.”
  - “A superb government service. Fast and friendly service.”
  - “The staff was courteous and helpful. The information arrived promptly. Very Impressive!”
  - “I use the Clearinghouse quite frequently and am always satisfied.”
  - “Received excellent service. The report I received was most helpful. Most grateful for your service.”
- Approximately 12% of the respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Some of those that were dissatisfied responded that it was because their request was not responded to in a timely manner. Some comments received from dissatisfied respondents were as follows:
  - “There is no evidence in my records that my request was answered.”
  - “My request was sent in March and I have not received the information to date. This delay is the reason for my ‘dissatisfied’ response.”

- “Usually satisfied, this time very dissatisfied. The items requested have not been received.”
- “The people I spoke with were courteous, but I had to call several times to get the information.”

Some of the comments from dissatisfied customers appeared to be related to issues outside of the control of the Clearinghouse staff. Examples of such issues include the failure of a manufacturer to resolve a potential problem, absence of a follow-up investigation by CPSC staff, carry-over dissatisfaction from previous FOIA requests where the nature of the notification process precludes a timely response, and consumers who call to check on the status of a complaint.

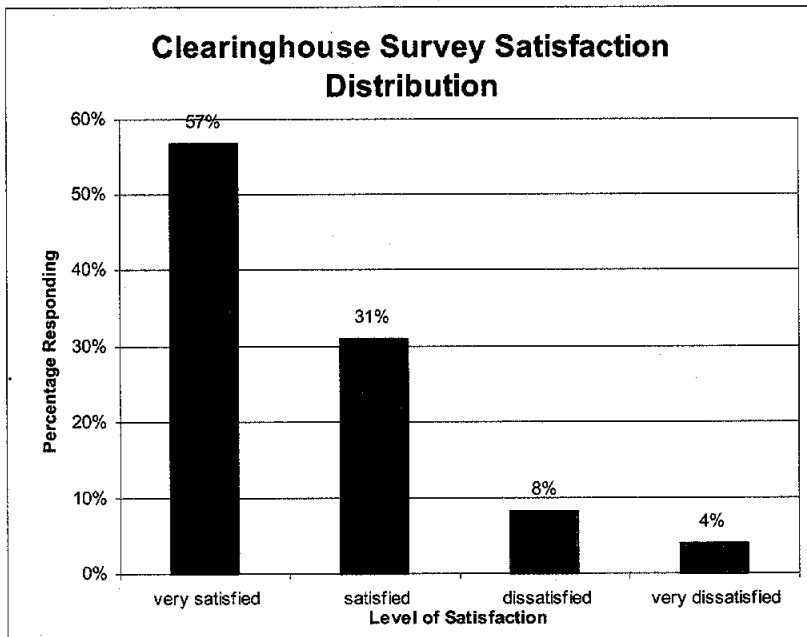


Figure 4

The results for the other questions are shown in Figure 5.

- Eighty-four percent of the respondents were satisfied with how quickly they received the information that they requested from the Clearinghouse.
- Ninety-one percent of the survey respondents agreed that they would use the Clearinghouse again.
- Approximately 83% of the respondents were satisfied with the information that they received. Some of the comments of those dissatisfied with the information are as follows:
  - “I was hoping to get a different more concise collection of statistics. I had to read through a lot of data and compile it myself.”
  - “If the data I received can be in digital form (files). That would be even more helpful. But still thanks a lot.”

- "I would have liked to know the # of inquiries/complaints you rec'd on this particular problem and what [the company's] official explanation was."
- "It would be helpful if responses to FOIA requests are notarized or certified. Such an approach will negate the need to later contact your office to get someone to testify in court."

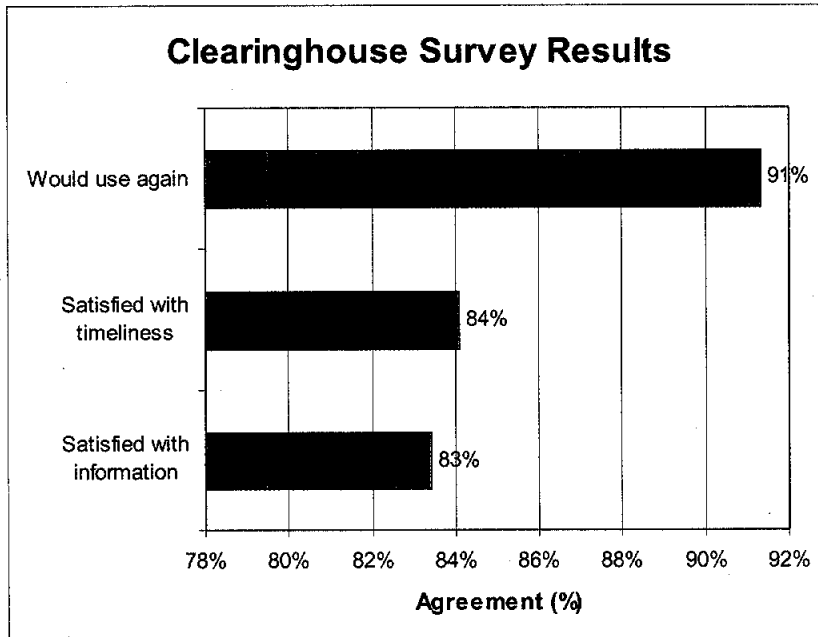


Figure 5

### Comparison to Previous Surveys

The results of this survey were compared to those conducted in 1996 and 1999. The results of that comparison are shown in Figure 6.

The questions on timeliness and the overall satisfaction showed statistically significant differences (using a 5% significance level), with the 2002 performance being lower than both 1999 and 1996 results. As discussed above, respondents who answered that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Clearinghouse often added by a comment regarding dissatisfaction with the timeliness of response; therefore, general satisfaction appeared to be related to timeliness. A cross-tabulation of general satisfaction and satisfaction with timeliness responses showed a strong relationship. Individual records were then examined for 25 cases where the respondent was dissatisfied with the timeliness of the Clearinghouse. In all but one of these cases, the number of business days to respond was 4 days or less. However, in eight of these cases, based on the notes in the records and comments on the questionnaires, the respondent was actually dissatisfied with some aspect of a previous contact with the Clearinghouse, not the request answered by the Clearinghouse that resulted in their receiving the survey. In these eight cases, four respondents mentioned a lack of follow-up on the complaint

while six expressed concerns over timeliness from a previous request. In two other cases, a large amount of information had been requested, and it is possible that not all of this information had been received at the time the respondent received the survey. No conclusion could be drawn from the other 15 cases. It should be noted that, in regard to the concern with follow-up, CPSC staff might not make the decision or be responsible for the follow-up action.

Timeliness may in fact be reduced due to the potentially increased workloads and reductions in staff in the Clearinghouse. Therefore, further study into the timeliness of response and methods to improve the timeliness may be desired to quantify whether the actual response time has changed.

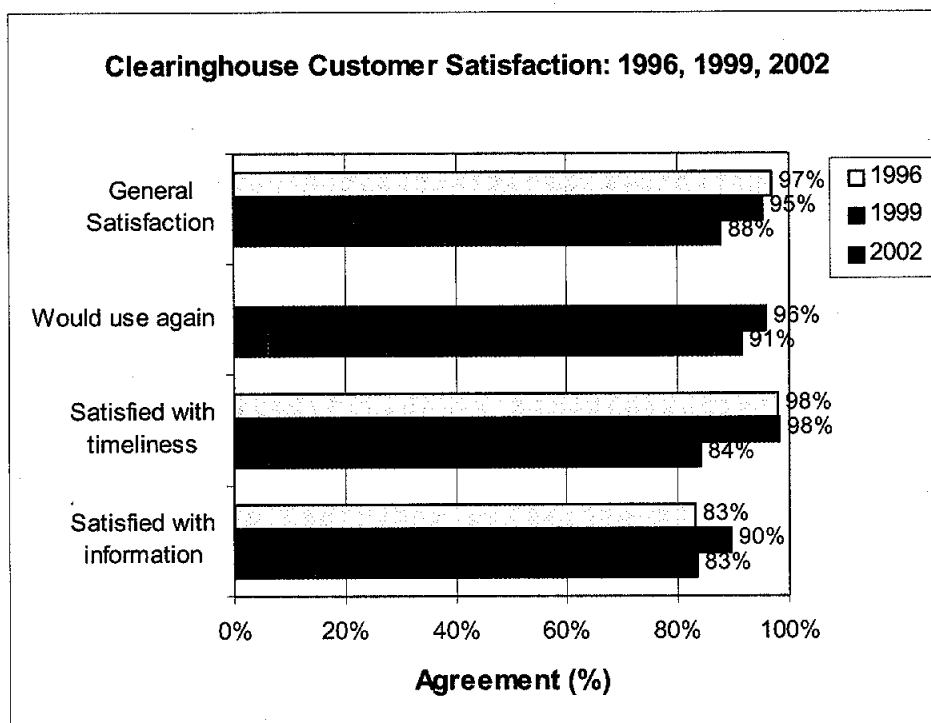


Figure 6

### Recommendations

Timeliness appears to be an issue according to a number of respondents in this Clearinghouse survey. Therefore, we recommend performing a study to investigate ways to improve timeliness of the Clearinghouse. In addition, more effort should be made to set users' expectations about Clearinghouse services. For example, the Clearinghouse should inform users more clearly that CPSC might not always provide them with additional or follow-up information regarding their complaint, or that if a large volume of information has been requested then the timeline for response will be extended. This could be done through improvements in the existing letter to users and through interim responses to users for large-volume requests. Also, CPSC may want to consider trying to better identify which requestors are associated with functions outside of the Clearinghouse, including checking the status of a complaint, in the next survey.

The Clearinghouse also suggested the following recommendations:

1. Contact customers who reach us by a method other than the telephone before beginning the customer's request. We'll discuss data requirements and options for response. For example, attorneys may be asked if they want their data certified. The customer will be told when his or her data will be mailed, faxed, etc.
2. Customers will receive a follow-up call or email to see if they have received their information and to ask if they have questions.

These procedures will apply primarily to "newer" Clearinghouse customers. We have on-going relationships with several customers where this level of contact is not necessary.

## State Partners Program

### Methodology

We conducted the mixed-mode electronic/telephone survey for the State Partners program over the period May 1 to June 5, 2002. A total of 24 partners responded to the first e-mail questionnaire (49% of those with valid e-mail addresses). The average response time for the e-mail questionnaire was 2.29 days, with most (18) responding within the first two days. The follow-up e-mail was also effective, yielding another 10 responses (20% of the total number of surveys returned). The facsimile surveys also were successful, providing an additional 9 responses. The telephone interviews then gave the final 6 responses to give a total of 49 responses (response rate of 92%).

The complete survey results and comments are in Appendix A. Further details of the methodology are described in Appendix B.

### Findings

CPSC set a strategic goal for customer satisfaction with the State Partners Program of 90%. The survey results show that we exceeded that goal with a general satisfaction of 96%.

The general satisfaction survey results are shown in Figure 7.

- As shown in Figure 7, about 96% of the respondents said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied in general, with the way the State Partners program works. Sixty percent of the respondents reported they were satisfied and 36% were very satisfied. Many comments attest to the satisfaction with the program.
  - “This is something I believe is an absolute necessity to CPSC and to states all across this nation.”
  - “Having an agreement provides authority if questions are raised.”
  - “Any time I contact an individual at CPSC, I get prompt and helpful information.”
  - “Our partnership with CPSC allows us to fulfill this vital area of consumer protection.”
  - “We feel that we have a strong relationship with CPSC that supports our program and believe we have been able to contribute to your program as well.”
  - “We have enjoyed working on tasks together and appreciate the opportunity to do so.”
  - “We...look forward to continuing this outstanding partnership for many years to come.”
  - “We are very pleased with this relationship.”
- About 4% responded that they were either undecided or dissatisfied and no one reported being very dissatisfied. The respondents that were dissatisfied had limited resources and wanted more support from CPSC.
  - “We would like to do more with CPSC, and maybe be given some activities that can be done in our community.”

- "Your support in the form of information is invaluable. But just a little financial support would help me sell the value of these programs to my superiors."
- "I wish there was a way that CPSC could provide some financial support for educational programs."
- "We wish we could do more but time and money do not allow it."
- "Reimbursement rates for recall visits are low when one considers staff time, mileage, etc."

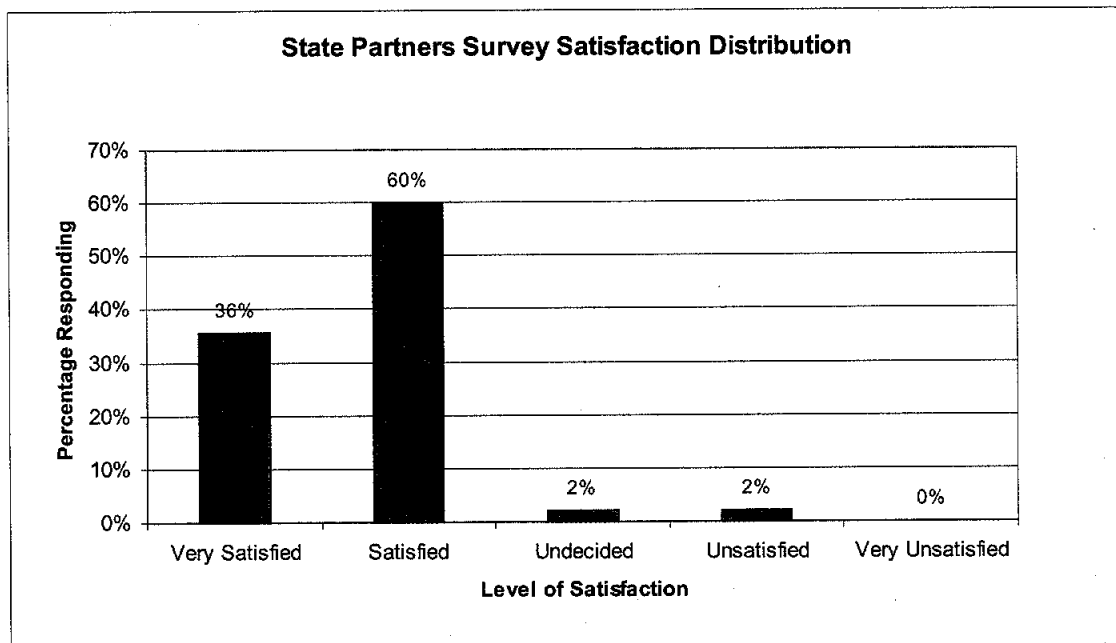


Figure 7

Results for the other questions are shown in Figure 8.

- Almost all of the respondents (98%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the information that they receive from CPSC.
- About 94% responded that they get CPSC news releases in a timely manner to respond to their customers either all or most of the time.
- Sixty-nine percent agreed that CPSC responds to their requests for materials within 5 days.
- Seventy-seven percent reported that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the number of joint activities between them and CPSC.
- About 55% of the state contacts surveyed reported that they have a partnership agreement with CPSC. Of those who do, 67% said that it was current and signed within the last 3 years.
- Of those who have a partnership agreement with CPSC, 78% agree that it eliminates duplication of effort a lot more or some.



- Seventy-four percent of the state contacts reported that having an agreement is very useful or useful in accomplishing state consumer product safety objectives.

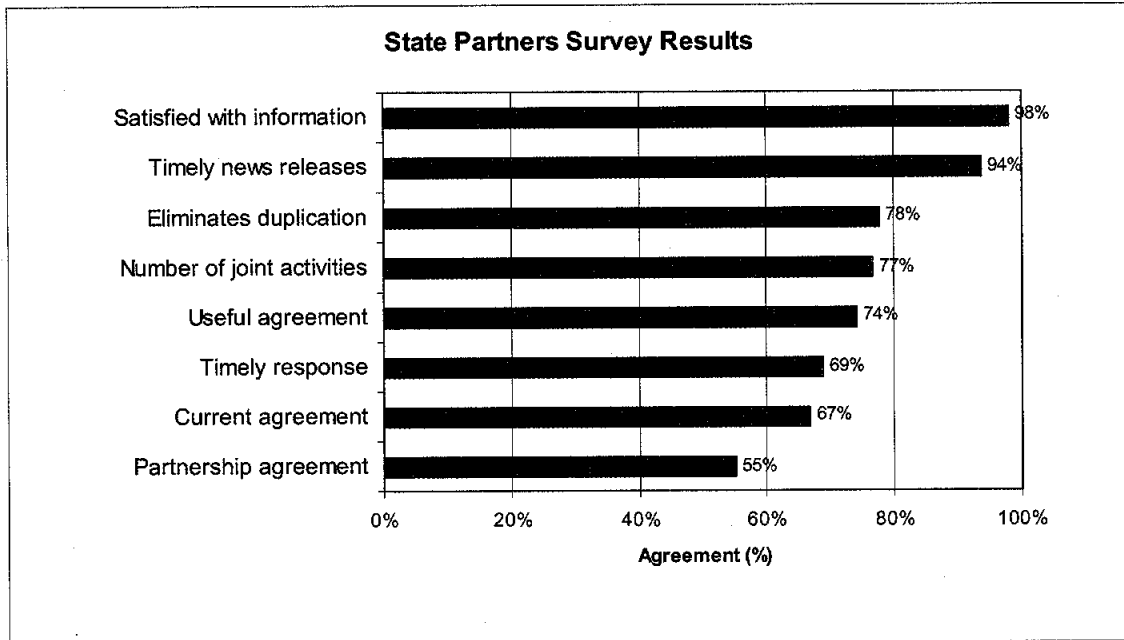


Figure 8

### Comparison to Previous Surveys

The results of this survey were compared to those conducted in 1996 and 1999. The results of that comparison are shown in Figure 9. Note that the question on the number of joint activities was not asked in either 1996 or 1999.

Two questions showed statistically significant differences (using a 5% significance level): that the partnership agreement eliminates duplication and that CPSC responds to requests for injury data, recall advice and education materials within five days. The difference on eliminating duplication (85% in 1996, 100% in 1999 and 78% in 2002) may not be indicative of a problem – State Partners could be gathering more information on their own than they were in 1999 or 1996. Further investigations are required into this area to determine whether this is a problem. In regard to the drop in response time (91% in 1996, 88% in 1999 and 69% in 2002), three respondents expressed concern that they did not get a return telephone call or were not acknowledged when a request was made. Their comments are as follows:

- “We were disappointed that CPSC did not return a call about regulating a children's product.”
- “I was disappointed recently when I made an inquiry at the headquarters level regarding a product being manufactured as a school project. I never did receive a response to the voice message I left.”

- "When [our state] has initiated a product recall in our state and has sent information to the appropriate region, follow-up is not forthcoming from the regions. We would like to know what CPSC does with our information, and if CPSC will be taking action."

This may require further investigation to see if a problem with responsiveness exists.

Although not statistically significant, some trends may be of note. One trend is the drop in the number of contacts who indicated that they knew an agreement with CPSC was in place (68% in 1996, 59% in 1999 and 55% in 2002). For those who knew they had an agreement, there also appeared to be a drop in number of those who knew that the agreement with CPSC was current (75% in 1999 and 67% in 2002) and a drop in the number of respondents who felt that it was useful (96% in 1996, 90% in 1999 and 74% in 2002). It appears that further efforts should be made to increase the frequency of contact with many of our State Partners to re-energize those partners to help increase the effectiveness of the State Partners program. This may involve reviewing and updating existing agreements as appropriate.

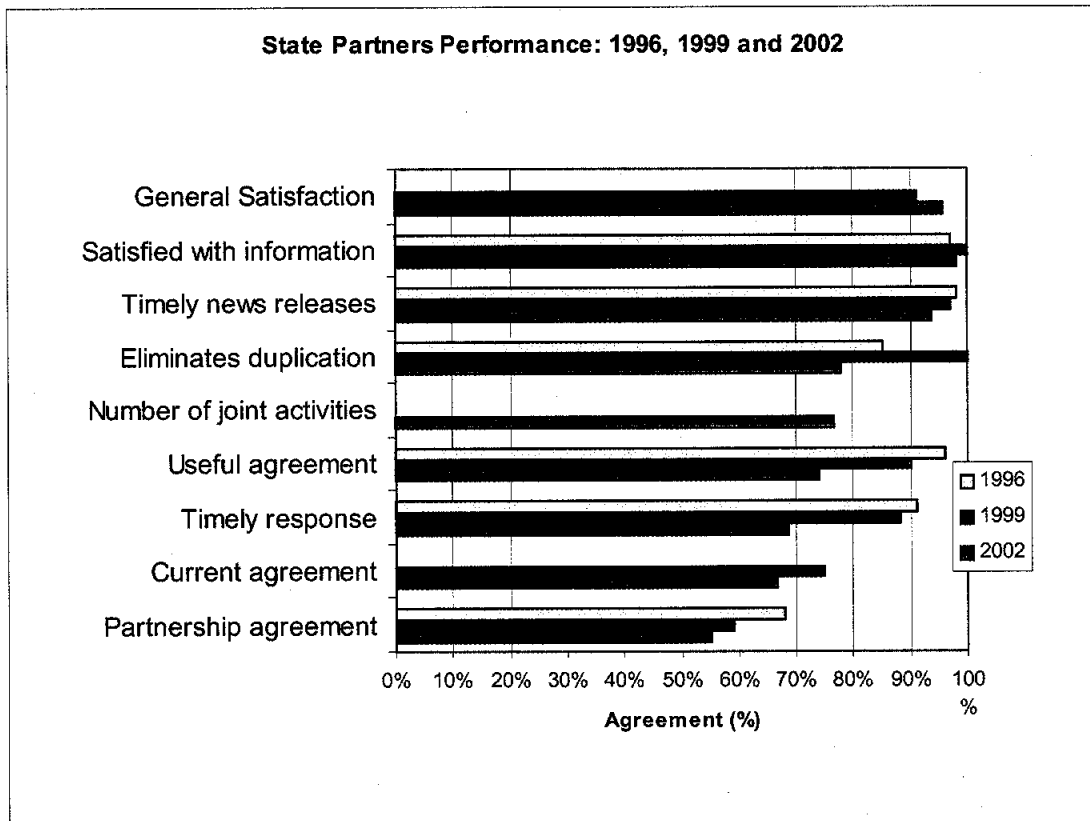


Figure 9

## **Recommendations**

Approximately 55% of the states responded that their state had a partnership agreement with CPSC whether it was current (signed within the last three years) or not. The respondents could have been unaware of an agreement that did exist if the agreement was with another office within the state or if the agreement was not recently signed. We recommend increasing the contact with our state partners to make them more aware of those partnerships.

Additionally, when comparing previous survey results with those from 2002, statistically significant decreases were identified in the timeliness of requests for data and in the respondents' sense that the State Partners program eliminates duplication. It would be worth investigating whether these decreases signal important changes in the perception of the program.

## Comparison to Customer Satisfaction at Other Federal Agencies

An attempt was made to compare the results in this study to the customer satisfaction results in similar studies at 30 other Federal agencies, focusing on those agencies that provide services to customers (military agencies were excluded). Annual and performance plans from the last three years, available on the government agency web sites, were reviewed to identify those organizations with similar customer satisfaction goals and who measured customer satisfaction using a customer survey. Agencies that used the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) to measure customer satisfaction were not included in the comparison because the ACSI is a composite score of multiple factors. In addition, the results had to be reported as a percentage of customers responding with a high rating; agencies that reported average results on a numeric scale (for example, 4.3 out of 5.0) were not included because we could not easily compare those results to CPSC's results. Table 1 shows a summary of this review.

Agency	Rating	Year	Comments	Source
Social Security Administration (SSA)	81%	2001	Customer Survey: rating of good, very good, or excellent	SSA 2003 Annual Performance Plan
Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation Program	80%	2002	Customer satisfaction survey	VA Performance Plan for FY 2003
Small Business Administration (SBA) Entrepreneurial Development programs	80%	2001	Customer satisfaction survey	SBA FY 2002 Budget Request and Performance Plan
General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Technology Service (FTS)	76%	2000	Customer Survey: Percent of Customers Satisfied with FTS Programs, Products, Services & Representatives	GSA FY 2002 Performance Plan
General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Supply Service	72%	2000	Customer Survey: Percentage of responses in the category "highly satisfied"	GSA FY 2002 Performance Plan
Patent and Trademark Office	70%	2001	Customer Survey: overall customer satisfaction	U.S. Patent and Trademark Office FY 2003 Annual Performance Plan

TABLE 1

While this review was not exhaustive, and the types of services offered vary greatly by agency, it is clear that overall customer satisfaction with CPSC's Hotline (91%) and Clearinghouse (88%) services and the State Partners Program (96%) compares favorably to the customer satisfaction reported in programs at other agencies.

## Concluding Remarks

CPSC conducted surveys to evaluate the level of customer satisfaction with the Hotline, Clearinghouse and State Partners program. Based on the results of the surveys, CPSC is substantively meeting the general satisfaction goal of 90% for each program. These results compare favorably with the results of recent customer satisfaction surveys at other Federal agencies, which showed customer satisfaction ratings ranging from 70% to 81%. Comparisons of the results of these CPSC surveys to previous CPSC surveys showed statistically significant differences in areas of each program, including satisfaction with the Hotline recorded messages, the timeliness of information from the Clearinghouse, and the awareness of an agreement with state partners. These differences indicate areas for potential improvement for these services. Recommendations were provided for improvements in the Hotline, Clearinghouse and State Partners program.

## References

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<sup>3</sup>Sheehan, K.B., and Hoy, M.G., *Using E-Mail to Survey Internet Users in the United States: Methodology and Assessment*, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, Vol. 4, No. 3, March 1999.

<sup>4</sup>Sheehan, K.B., *E-mail Survey Response Rates: A Review*, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, Vol. 6, No. 2, January 2001.

<sup>5</sup>Yun, G.W., and Trumbo, C.W., *Comparative Response to a Survey Executed by Post, E-mail and Web Form*, *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, Vol. 6, No. 1, September 2000.

## **APPENDIX A: RESULTS SUMMARY**

<b>Hotline Mail Survey Question</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Q1	For your most recent call to the Hotline, did you...?	227	File a complaint	134	59%
			Get product safety/recall info	46	20%
			Get a referral	9	4%
			Ask for a publication	66	29%
			Ask to be put on a mailing list	16	7%
			Other	14	6%
Q2	Was this the first time you ever used the Hotline?	227	Yes	197	87%
			No	28	12%
			Don't Know	2	1%
Q3	Did you get a busy signal when you first dialed the Hotline?	227	Yes	10	4%
			No	202	89%
			Don't Know	15	7%
Q4	Were the instructions on how to use the Hotline easy to follow?	224	Yes	206	92%
			No	9	4%
			Don't Know	9	4%
Q5	Did you listen to any safety information from a recorded message?	218	Yes	43	20%
			No	132	61%
			Don't Know	43	20%
Q5a	Was the recorded safety information you wanted easy to find?	42	Yes	29	69%
			No	10	24%
			Don't Know	3	7%
Q5b	Were the recorded safety messages you listened to easy to understand?	41	Yes	36	88%
			No	4	10%
			Don't Know	1	2%
Q6	Was the Hotline staff person you talked to courteous?	222	Yes	218	98%
			No	3	1%
			Don't Know	1	0%
Q7	Was the information you received from the staff person easy to understand?	225	Yes	217	96%
			No	7	3%
			Don't Know	1	0%
Q8	Would you use this Hotline again?	226	Yes	203	90%
			No	8	4%
			Don't Know	15	7%
Q9	In general, how satisfied are you with the way the Hotline worked?	226	Very Satisfied	142	63%
			Satisfied	63	28%
			Dissatisfied	13	6%
			Very Dissatisfied	8	4%

Clearinghouse Mail Survey Question	Total	Response	Number	Percentage
Q1 I was satisfied with the information I received.	175	Yes	146	83%
		No	25	14%
		Don't Know	4	2%
Q2 I was satisfied with how quickly I received the information.	176	Yes	148	84%
		No	25	14%
		Don't Know	3	2%
Q3 I would use the Clearinghouse again.	173	Yes	158	91%
		No	4	2%
		Don't Know	11	6%
Q4 In general, how satisfied are you with the way the Clearinghouse worked?	171	Very Satisfied	97	57%
		Satisfied	53	31%
		Dissatisfied	14	8%
		Very Dissatisfied	7	4%



State Partners Survey Question		Total	Response	Number	Percentage
Q1 Does your state have a partnership agreement with CPSC such as a State Action Plan, Worksharing, or Memorandum of Understanding?	Yes	49	Yes	27	55%
	No		No	16	33%
	Don't know		Don't know	6	12%
Q2 Is your state's agreement with CPSC current (signed within the last 3 years)?	Yes	27	Yes	18	67%
	No		No	5	19%
	Don't know		Don't know	4	15%
Q3 Have you found that having an agreement with CPSC is useful in accomplishing state consumer product safety objectives?	Very useful	27	Very useful	11	41%
	Useful		Useful	9	33%
	Undecided		Undecided	5	19%
	Of little use		Of little use	2	7%
	Not useful		Not useful	0	0%
Q4 To what extent do partnership agreements help to eliminate any duplication of effort involving compliance, hazard identification, or consumer information areas?	A lot more	27	A lot more	11	41%
	Some		Some	10	37%
	No difference		No difference	6	22%
	Less		Less	0	0%
	A lot less		A lot less	0	0%
Q5 Do you get CPSC news releases in a timely manner to respond to your customers?	All of the time	48	All of the time	31	65%
	Most of the time		Most of the time	14	29%
	Some of the time		Some of the time	2	4%
	None of the time		None of the time	1	2%
	Don't know		Don't know	0	0%
Q6 Does the CPSC respond to your requests for injury data, product recall advice and education materials within 5 days?	Yes	48	Yes	33	69%
	No		No	4	8%
	Don't Know		Don't Know	11	23%
Q7 Are you satisfied with the information you receive from CPSC?	Very satisfied	49	Very satisfied	25	51%
	Satisfied		Satisfied	23	47%
	Undecided		Undecided	1	2%
	Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied	0	0%
	Very dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied	0	0%
Q8 Are you satisfied with the number of joint activities CPSC initiates?	Very satisfied	47	Very satisfied	10	21%
	Satisfied		Satisfied	26	55%
	Undecided		Undecided	7	15%
	Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied	4	9%
	Very dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied	0	0%
Q9 In general, how satisfied are you with the way the State Partners program works?	Very satisfied	45	Very satisfied	16	36%
	Satisfied		Satisfied	27	60%
	Undecided		Undecided	1	2%
	Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Very dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied	0	0%

## **APPENDIX B: DETAILED METHODOLOGY**

## **Hotline**

### **Methodology**

The mail survey was conducted from July 23 to September 12, 2002. Over this period, callers who provided their addresses to CPSC staff were randomly selected to be mailed a survey. The survey respondents were divided into two groups in order to keep the lag time between making a request and receiving the survey questionnaire to a minimum. The first group consisted of callers from July 23 to August 15 while the second group consisted of callers from August 16 to September 12; each group had 182 potential respondents. The total number of potential respondents, 364, was selected to give an approximate sampling error of 5%, assuming a 40% response rate prior to the survey implementation. In his texts on survey techniques, Dillman<sup>1, 2</sup> recommends the use of multiple contacts to achieve high response rates. Therefore, for each of the two groups in the Hotline mail survey, four mailings were used. First, a pre-notification card was sent to all potential respondents. One week later, the first questionnaire was sent. A follow-up postcard reminding the potential respondents to return the questionnaire was sent a week later. Five weeks after the follow-up postcard was sent, a second survey was sent to those who had not yet responded. The surveys were numbered to detect duplicate responses. All mailings were hand-addressed, again to improve response rates.

Of the 364 callers who were selected to be mailed the surveys, 229 (65%) returned the questionnaires and 9 were returned as undeliverable. A total of 175 customers responded to the first questionnaire. Another 54 responded to the second questionnaire (24% of the total number responding). We did identify a large time lag from the postmarked date on the questionnaire to the time the Office of Planning and Evaluation received this questionnaire (some questionnaires took as long as thirteen weeks to reach our office). New procedures in the Post Office to check all Government mail may have led to this delay. Because of this delay, some customers received two surveys (on the belief that they had not returned the first one). For those who responded twice (11 total), the second questionnaire was discarded.

### **Recommendations**

For future Hotline surveys we would recommend using procedures similar to those shown here, including hand-addressing mailings and using multiple contacts to achieve high response rates. We recommend waiting an additional week or two to send out the second survey should delays in receiving Government mail continue to prevent multiple responses.

## Clearinghouse

### Methodology

We conducted mail surveys for the Clearinghouse. We first identified all requests for information that had been completed in a two month period between March 20 and May 20, 2002; a total of 635 records were identified for this period. Potential respondents were limited to those whose requests for information were completed by the Clearinghouse and were requestors from outside the agency. After eliminating FOIA requests, internal staff requests, duplicate requesters and requestors without addresses, approximately 346 names were available. From this list 260 potential respondents were randomly selected for the mail survey. The total number of potential respondents, 260, was selected to give an approximate sampling error of 5%, assuming a 50% response rate prior to the survey implementation. In his texts on survey techniques, Dillman<sup>1,2</sup> recommends the use of multiple contacts to achieve high response rates. Therefore, for the Clearinghouse mail survey four mailings were used. On May 30 a pre-notification card was sent to all potential respondents. One week later, on June 6, the first questionnaire was sent. A follow-up postcard reminding the potential respondents to return the questionnaire was sent a week later. Three weeks after the follow-up postcard was sent, a second survey was sent to those who had not yet responded. All mailings were hand-addressed to further improve response rates.

We received 177 (72%) of the mail surveys completed and thirteen were returned as undeliverable. A total of 128 customers responded to the first questionnaire. Another 49 responded to the second questionnaire (28% of the total number responding). We did identify a large time lag from the postmarked date on the questionnaire to the time the Office of Planning and Evaluation received this questionnaire (some questionnaires took as long as eight weeks to reach our office). New procedures in the Post Office to check all Government mail may have led to this delay. Because of the large delay we believed that few people had responded to the first survey; therefore, we sent two questionnaires to a larger number of customers than was required (172 out of the sample of 260 received a second survey). For those who responded twice (31 total), the second questionnaire was discarded (these respondents were identified by the name and address on the survey).

In evaluating the results from the Clearinghouse, it was discovered that some of the contacts with the Clearinghouse include requests for the status of a complaint. The survey was primarily designed to gauge customer satisfaction with how well the Clearinghouse provides requested information and statistics related to death and injury associated with consumer products. Therefore, requestors who call to check on the status of their complaint only and do not request additional information may be out of scope for the purposes of the survey. CPSC may want to consider removing these cases from the sample, or at least stratifying the data, in the next survey.

### Recommendations

For future Clearinghouse surveys we would recommend using survey procedures similar to those shown here, including hand-addressing mailings and using multiple contacts to achieve high response rates. We recommend waiting an additional week or two to send out the second survey

should delays in receiving Government mail continue. Also, CPSC may want to consider trying to better identify which requestors are associated with functions outside of the Clearinghouse, including checking the status of a complaint, in the next survey.

## State Partners Program

### Methodology

Previous State Partner customer satisfaction surveys completed in 1996 and 1999 were conducted entirely by telephone. Telephone surveys can produce results quickly and allow the person interviewed to express views they might not otherwise put down on paper. Telephone surveys also allow the interviewer the chance to explain unclear questions. However, past experience has shown that busy professionals can be difficult to reach, possibly leading to lower response rates and higher personnel costs in comparison to other techniques. The use of e-mail and facsimile can reduce the effect of some of these problems, allowing each respondent to complete the survey at their own pace.<sup>3</sup> In addition, it has been theorized that the use of mixed-mode surveys (using different distribution techniques within the same survey) can actually improve the motivation of the respondents because people may appreciate being able to choose their response mode.<sup>4</sup> In his texts on survey techniques, Dillman<sup>1, 2</sup> recommends the use of multiple contacts to achieve high response rates. Therefore, the 2002 State Partners survey was conducted using a mixed-mode technique with multiple contacts with each partner. Electronic means were used initially to send the pre-notification letter, the questionnaire and the follow-up note to each respondent; telephone interviews were conducted for the remaining non-responding state and territory partners.

We conducted the mixed-mode electronic/telephone survey for the State Partners program over the period May 1 to June 5, 2002. There were 53 states and territories to contact. A pre-notification e-mail was sent initially, followed by the questionnaire in e-mail form one week later. One week after the questionnaire was sent, a follow-up e-mail was sent to those who had not responded to the original questionnaire. Three days after the follow-up e-mail, a fax that included the questionnaire was sent to those still not responding. Faxes were also sent to those state or territories where a valid e-mail address was not available. Four days after sending out faxes, states and territories were contacted by telephone in an attempt to elicit responses from those who had not responded to either the e-mails or the faxes.

The pre-notification e-mail used in this survey was very useful in identifying changes in contacts and non-functional e-mails addresses. In this pre-notification phase undeliverable e-mails were uncovered for 6 partners and an additional 6 partners reported that the contact had changed; two of those undeliverable e-mails were subsequently updated, while the other contacts were sent faxes. A total of 24 partners responded to the first e-mail questionnaire (49% of those with valid e-mail addresses). The average response time for the e-mail questionnaire was 2.29 days, with most (18) responding within the first two days. The follow-up e-mail was also effective, yielding another 10 responses (20% of the total number of surveys returned). These results compare well with those of Sheehan and Hoy<sup>3</sup>, who found in their e-mail survey an average return time of 3.65 days, with the follow-up e-mail providing a 23% improvement in responses in that study. The facsimile surveys also were successful, providing an additional 9 responses. The telephone interviews then gave the final 6 responses to give a total of 49 responses (response rate of 92%).

## **Recommendations**

For future State Partner surveys I would recommend using procedures similar to those shown here. Although there is conflicting evidence regarding the influence of pre-notification on survey response rate<sup>5</sup>, this practice at least serves as a courtesy to our state and territory partners, letting them know the survey is on its way. As expected, multiple follow-up contacts are critical for achieving a high response rate. Also, the use of e-mail and facsimile in conducting the survey reduced the personnel cost in time on the telephone, and allowed our State Partners to complete the survey at their own pace. E-mail could be replaced with a Web-based survey to reduce processing time and effort. The use of e-mail does not come without a cost, however. For example, we may not have captured all of the comments in an e-mail survey because some people have been more likely to verbalize their opinions rather than put them in writing. In this survey 21 out of 49 respondents (43%) added comments to their surveys, while in the 1999 telephone survey 27 out of 34 respondents (79%) chose to provide comments. However, based on this survey the benefits of using electronic survey techniques appear to outweigh the costs.