

Consumer Product Safety Alert

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

Newer Hair Dryers Prevent Electrocutions

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends that consumers buy hair dryers that comply with the voluntary standard (effective January 1, 1991) that gives added protection against electrocution.

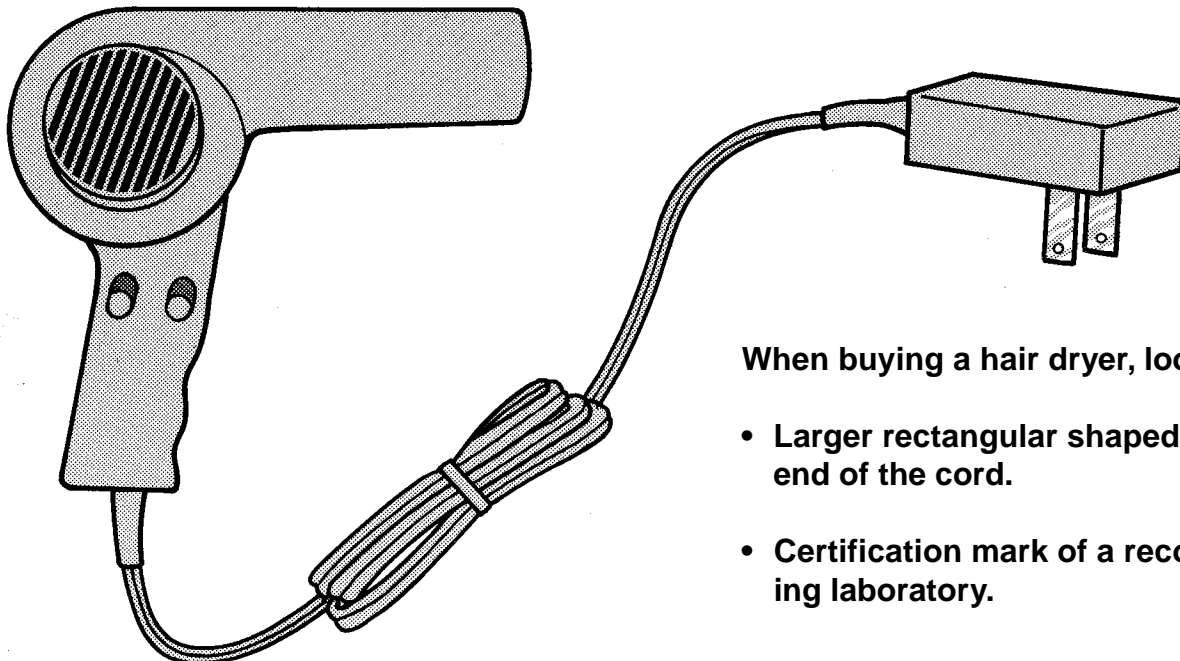
To comply with the voluntary standard, hand-held hair dryers must protect against electrocution if they fall into water with the switch in either the "on" or "off" position.

CPSC cautions that regardless of the improved protection, under no circumstances should consumers use a hair dryer where it could come in contact with water. Electricity and water are a potentially deadly combination, and in their presence children should always be supervised.

In the early 1980's an average of 18 electrocutions each year were caused by hand-held hair dryers falling or being pulled into water. That number has fallen to approximately 4 deaths per year since the voluntary standard to prevent electrocution went into effect. However, the CPSC esti-

mates that there are millions of hair dryers still in use that do not provide any protection from electrocution in water. These older hair dryers continue to pose the risk of electrocution in bathrooms and other locations around water where permanent or portable ground-fault circuit-interrupters (GFCIs) are not used. Some hair dryers made before 1991 provide only partial protection from electrocution, in that they provide protection only when the switch is in the "off" position. These hair dryers may still be sold. CPSC encourages consumers to purchase the newer hair dryers that comply with the voluntary standards and thus provide the added measure of safety.

For broad protection from electrocution at home, CPSC recommends having GFCIs installed in wall outlets in bathrooms, kitchens, basements, outdoor circuits, and garages by an electrician, or buying portable plug-in GFCIs that can be moved from outlet to outlet. GFCIs are widely available at building supply houses, electrical supply houses, and hardware stores.



When buying a hair dryer, look for:

- **Larger rectangular shaped plug at the end of the cord.**
- **Certification mark of a recognized testing laboratory.**