



U.S. Consumer
Product Safety
Commission

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IN THIS ISSUE

Bike Helmets.....	1
Mattress/Bedding Fires.....	4
Fast-Track Recalls.....	6
CPSC Report Form.....	7
MECAP News.....	8
CPSC Recalls.....	10
NHTSA Recalls.....	11

Includes
recalls from
the National
Highway Traffic
Safety Administration

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY REVIEW

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Bike Helmets: A New Safety Standard

To help protect bikers, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recently issued a new federal safety standard for bicycle helmets. This standard will provide, for the first time, one uniform mandatory safety standard for all bike helmets, as well as special requirements for young children's helmets.

By March 1999, all bike helmets manufactured or imported for sale in the U.S. must comply with the CPSC standard. A bike helmet will carry a label or sticker stating that it meets CPSC's new safety standard. Bike helmets currently conform to several different voluntary standards.

CPSC's new bike helmet standard includes requirements for helmet performance during a crash, greater coverage for young children's heads, and chin strap requirements to help keep helmets on the head during a fall or collision.¹ This new standard was developed as a result of the Children's Bicycle Helmet Safety Act of 1994.

Injury Data

In recent years, about 900 people were killed annually in bicycle-related incidents.² Most (90%) of these deaths were associated with motor vehicle collisions.

Bike-related injuries took an especially high toll on children. More youngsters, ages 5 to 14, went to U.S. hospital emergency rooms for bicycle-related injuries than for injuries associated with any other sport. For children under age 5, bike-related injuries were number two for sports-related injuries, behind playground injuries.³

In 1996, among all age groups, an estimated 566,000 people were treated for bike-related injuries in U.S. hospital emergency rooms. About 356,000 of those injured were children under age 15. A CPSC study of bicycle hazards indicated that the injury risk for children under age 15 was more than five times that for older riders.⁴

Head Injuries

Approximately 60% of all bike-related deaths involved head injuries. For children under age 5, about 64% of the deaths involved head injuries.

Of total injuries, approximately 30% involved the head and face. Young children incurred almost twice the proportion of head and facial injuries as older victims.

In the CPSC study, about one-half of the injuries to children under age 10 involved the head, compared with one-fifth of the injuries to older riders. This may have been partly due to the fact that only 5% of the victims younger than 15 in that study were wearing a helmet, compared with 30% of those 15 and older.

Continued on page 2

In several studies, bike helmet usage has been associated with dramatically reducing the risk of head and brain injury. One widely-cited study puts this reduction at 85% for head injury and 88% for brain injury.⁵

Major Provisions of the Standard

CPSC's new bike helmet safety standard mandates several important safety requirements. These include the following:

- **Impact protection in a crash:** The standard establishes a performance test to ensure that helmets will adequately protect the head in a collision or fall. This test involves dropping a helmet attached to a headform from specified heights onto a fixed steel anvil. Three shapes of anvils (flat, hemispherical, and curbstone) are used to represent different surfaces that may be encountered in actual riding conditions.

The impact tests are performed on different helmets of each model being evaluated. Each is subjected to one of four differing environmental conditions. These include high, low, and room temperatures, as well as immersion in water for several hours.

Test helmets are impacted at several different points to ensure that the helmet provides protection all around the head.

- **Children's helmets and head coverage:** The new bike helmet standard specifies an increased area of head coverage for young children, ages 1 to 5. This additional coverage is to account for the different characteristics of young children's heads and will provide added head protection for this age group.
- **Chin strap strength and stability:** The performance tests for chin straps measure whether they are strong enough to prevent breakage or excessive elongation, and whether they work to resist a helmet's rolling off the head during a collision or fall.

In the strength test, the chin strap, when subjected to a weight falling a specified distance, must remain intact and not elongate more than a certain amount.

In the roll-off test, a helmet is secured onto a test headform. A falling weight is attached to the edge of the helmet shell to attempt to pull the helmet off the headform. The helmet must remain on the test headform to pass the test.

Additional Requirements

In addition to the provisions above, the new bike helmet standard includes requirements for the following:

- **Peripheral vision:** The standard requires that a helmet allow a field for vision of 105 degrees to both the left and right of straight ahead.
- **Labels and instructions:** Helmets must carry labels including information on, among other things, how to care for the helmet, what to do if the helmet is damaged, and how a helmet should be fitted and worn.
- **Certification labels, testing, and recordkeeping provisions:** To help ensure that bicycle helmets meet the CPSC requirements, manufacturers must have a certification test program and maintain test records. Bike helmets must have a label stating that they meet the CPSC standard.

— Scott Heh, Directorate for Engineering Sciences

For More Information

To obtain a copy of the Safety Standard for Bicycle Helmets briefing package, contact: Office of the Secretary, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207/ 301-504-0800.

The *Federal Register* notice with the final CPSC bike helmet standard is posted on the CPSC web site at www.cpsc.gov. Click on "Business," then "Official Federal Information," and then "CPSC Federal Register Notices of Interest." The web site also lists numerous CPSC brochures on bikes and bike helmet safety. Click on "Consumer," then "CPSC Publications," then "Recreational Safety."

Buying a Bike Helmet

■ **Should you replace your current helmet?**

If you have a bike helmet that meets current voluntary helmet safety standards — like those from the Snell Memorial Foundation, the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) — you do not need to rush out to buy a new bike helmet. These helmets provide good protection for the head.

By March 1999, all bike helmets manufactured or imported for sale in the U.S. must comply with the CPSC standard. Many manufacturers will likely offer helmets certified to the CPSC standard before its effective date. So, as it becomes time to replace a bike helmet (e.g., when a helmet is outgrown or damaged in a crash), look for a new helmet that meets the CPSC standard.

■ **How can you tell if a bike helmet complies with CPSC's new safety standard?**

A bike helmet will carry a label or sticker stating that it meets CPSC's new safety standard. A bike helmet for a young child will indicate that it meets CPSC's safety standard for bicycle helmets for those ages 1 and older with extended head coverage.

■ **What else should you look for when buying a new helmet?**

A helmet should fit comfortably and securely. It should be worn low and level near the eyebrows, not back on the forehead. The chin strap should be securely fastened and prevent the helmet from moving too much on the head. If you have trouble getting the helmet to fit correctly, ask for help from a knowledgeable salesperson or experienced biker.

To prevent head injuries, it's not enough to wear a bike helmet. A bike helmet must be worn correctly every time you ride.

■ **Will bike helmets meeting CPSC's standard provide protection for sports other than biking? If so, which ones?**

Bike helmets are often worn for recreational in-line skating or roller-skating. These sports are typically conducted on similar surfaces and at similar speeds as biking. In addition, knee and elbow pads and wrist guards are recommended for these sports.

Those who skateboard or do more aggressive (trick or freestyle) skating should look for helmets sold specifically for these activities and that meet standards for these sports. These helmets cover more of the head, especially in the back.

Who Wears the Gear?

According to a national estimate of bike helmet use, about 18% of all bicycle riders in the U.S. wear a bike helmet — the single most important piece of protective equipment for a biker. This estimate, from a CPSC survey, showed an increase from the estimated usage rate of 10% or less in the late 1980s.⁶

Bike helmet use is probably higher in the states and localities that have laws requiring people to wear them. Fifteen states and more than 60 localities have such laws. Some require people of all ages to wear bike helmets; some require only those under a certain age to wear them.

Maryland, for example, requires all people under age 16 to wear bike helmets; Montgomery County in Maryland requires all those under 18 to wear them. In contrast, the Maryland town of Sykesville requires people of all ages to wear bike helmets.

References

¹ Briefing package. Safety standard for bicycle helmets. Washington, DC: CPSC, 1997.

² National Center for Health Statistics.

³ CPSC. National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS). NEISS, operated by CPSC, is a statistical sample of the hospitals nationwide that have emergency departments. Each day, NEISS hospitals report to CPSC all emergency room-treated injuries associated with consumer products and related activities.

⁴ Tinsworth DK, Polen C, Cassidy S. Bicycle-related injuries: injury, hazard, and risk patterns. *International Journal for Consumer Safety*, 1994;1:207-220.

⁵ Thompson RS, Rivera FP, Thomson, DC. A case-control study of the effectiveness of bicycle safety helmets. *New England Journal of Medicine* 1989;320:1361-1367.

⁶ Rodgers G. The characteristics and use patterns of bicycle riders in the United States. *Journal of Safety Research*, 1994;25:83-96.

Mattress and Bedding Fires

Mattress and bedding fires are a major cause of residential fire deaths in this country.

According to a CPSC report, mattresses or bedding items were the first items ignited in an estimated 31,300 residential structure fires nationwide in a recent year. As a result of these fires, an estimated 610 people died, 3,540 were injured, and \$385.2 million in property losses occurred.¹

These figures represent about 7% of all residential structure fires and about 16% of all deaths and injuries that occurred in residential structure fires.

CPSC has long been involved in addressing these types of fires. For example, CPSC enforces a 1973 mandatory federal flammability standard that requires mattresses and mattress pads to resist ignition from cigarettes. Also, since 1994, CPSC has required disposable cigarette lighters to be child-resistant. Many of these mattress and bedding fires are started by young children playing with lighters.

In 1998, CPSC Chairman Ann Brown convened a Roundtable on Mattress and Bedclothes Fires. Fire protection specialists and members of industry from across the country attended the Roundtable. This meeting reinforced a commitment from industry to fund research that could lead to a new or revised fire safety standard. Attendees also agreed to explore the feasibility of a public education campaign to help prevent these fires.

Cause of Fires

According to national data, most mattress and bedding fires are ignited by open flame products (such as cigarette lighters and matches) or smoking materials (primarily cigarettes).

Since 1980, the relative rankings of the ignition sources of mattress and bedding fires have changed. In 1980, smoking materials were the major ignition source in these fires. Since 1989, open flame products were been the major ignition source.

Mattress and bedding fires ignited by smoking materials, however, caused a larger number of deaths. For example, in a recent year, open flame products were involved in an estimated 13,100 fires, where 190 people died. But smoking materials caused an estimated 9,300 fires, with 340 deaths. Most of these deaths occurred when smoking materials were discarded or the smoker/victim was asleep when the fire broke out.

In other causes of mattress and bedding fires, about 3,400 were ignited by arcing or overheating of electrical equipment. Another 3,400 were ignited by hot objects, such as heaters or lamps, that were too close to the mattress or bedding.

Child Play

Young children are often involved in starting these fires and are their primary victims. A typical scenario occurs when a child plays with fire, which ignites a mattress or bedding. Then the child often hides, making rescue more difficult and delaying efforts to extinguish the fire.

Child play accounted for about 9,200 open flame fires associated with mattresses and bedding in a recent year. These fires resulted in about 1,250 injuries and 180 deaths. This represented 95% of the deaths from open flame mattress and bedding fires. About two-thirds of the open flame deaths occurred to children under age 5 (*Figure 1*).

Mattress Standard

Since 1973, all mattresses and mattress pads manufactured for sale must conform to CPSC's mandatory

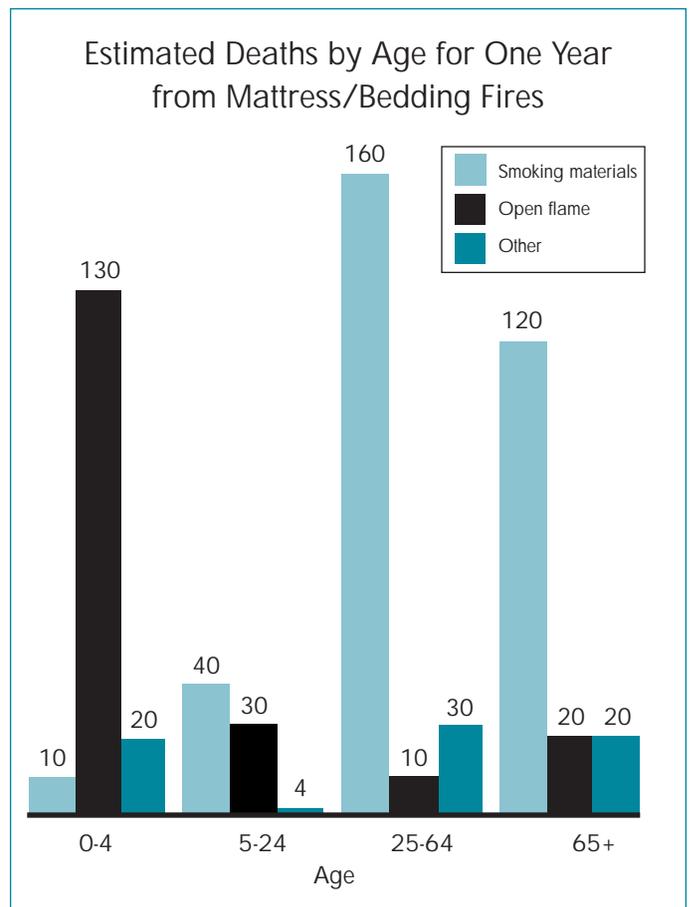


Figure 1

Standard for the Flammability of Mattresses (and Mattress Pads). This standard was enacted to reduce the ignition of mattresses by cigarettes.

However, mattress and bedding fires from cigarettes continue to occur. One reason is that some mattresses, manufactured before the standard took effect, are still in use. Some refurbished mattresses may not conform to the mattress flammability standard.

Reduction in Fires and Deaths

According to the 1997 CPSC report, the total number of mattress and bedding fires decreased more rapidly than residential fires overall between 1980 and 1993 — a 54% reduction for mattress and bedding fires compared with a 38% reduction for residential fires from all causes. This reduction was primarily due to fewer fires ignited by smoking materials.

Fire deaths involving cigarette ignition of mattresses decreased by an estimated 40%. In contrast, fire deaths in residential fires of all causes decreased by about 30% over this period.

Mattress and bedding fires and fire deaths decreased substantially for several reasons. The CPSC mattress safety standard contributed to this decline. Increased use of smoke detectors and reduced cigarette consumption also are believed to be involved in this reduction.

Further reductions in smoking material ignition of mattresses may occur as pre-standard mattresses are replaced with mattresses that meet the safety standard. In addition, flame ignitions of mattresses and bedding caused by children under age 5 playing with lighters may be reduced as newer child-resistant lighters replace lighters that are not child-resistant.

— *Linda E. Smith, Directorate for Epidemiology and Health Sciences*

Reference

¹ Boudreault M, Smith L. Residential fires in mattresses and bedding. Washington, DC: CPSC, 1997. National estimates are based on data from the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Protection Association.

Following Up on Fires

CPSC staff conducted a special study for its report on mattress and bedding fires. CPSC investigators arranged with local fire departments to identify and provide information on fires where the material first ignited was either a mattress or bedding. Other fires were identified through news reports.

CPSC staff attempted an on-site investigation whenever the mattress and/or bedding items were still available. Otherwise, investigations were completed by telephone.

Factors such as relocation, injury or death, or complete destruction of the home or mattress often precluded an on-site visit or response to investigators. In many cases, the mattress had been discarded after the fire and was unavailable for examination.

It was often difficult to tell whether the mattress or the bedding ignited first in a fire. In this study of 156 mattress and bedding fires, there were 94 reports of bedding igniting first. Where specified, the bedding item most often identified was a sheet. In 37 other fires, the mattress ignited first.

Children Involved

The age of the person involved in igniting the fire was identified in 124 fires. As in the national estimates, child play was a major cause. About one-third of those involved in fire ignition were children under age 5. Another 20% were ages 5 to 14.

Smoke detectors were reported present in 76% of the incidents. Of these, about 61% operated during the fire.

CPSC currently is conducting another special study to evaluate the effectiveness of CPSC's child-resistant cigarette lighter standard. That study, which will address the issue of child play and fire ignition with lighters, is expected to be completed in 1999.

For More Information

For a complete copy of the CPSC report, *Residential Fires in Mattresses and Bedding*, contact: Office of the Secretary, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207/301-504-0800.

Fast-Track Recalls

Getting dangerous products out of the marketplace faster is the hallmark of CPSC's recently instituted program called "fast-track product recalls."

Companies that report and simultaneously propose a satisfactory recall plan, to be implemented within 20 working days, may take advantage of this program. CPSC staff reviews the plan to ensure adequate correction of the problem and sufficient notification to the public. If CPSC approves the plan, the fast-track recall process proceeds.

Companies Must Report Defects

CPSC's traditional recall program can take three to four months. Under the law, companies are required to report defective or potentially hazardous products to CPSC. CPSC staff reviews all information, including any injuries or deaths associated with the product, and determines preliminarily whether a defect exists that warrants a recall. CPSC then works with the company on a plan to recall the product.

Under this procedure, some companies have concerns that CPSC's "preliminary determination" of a product defect could be used against them in product liability suits.

Fast-Track Benefits

The fast-track product recall program offers an alternative to companies. The new procedure reduces paperwork for firms and saves them time and money. It gets recalls underway sooner. Choosing the fast-track recall option also avoids the perceived stigma of a CPSC preliminary determination of a defect in a firm's product.

CPSC staff finds that firms conducting a fast-track recall are likely to do so again for a subsequent recall. Since adoption of the program, companies have chosen this option nearly 50% of the time. Over 200 firms have chosen to participate in this program.

More than 21 million individual consumer products have been affected by the fast-track recall process. Children have been protected from such hazards as choking on small parts on toys, falling from infant carriers, and strangling in defective mesh playyards. Recalls have covered clothes dryers, dishwashers, and computer scanners, all of which presented fire hazards; power tools with electrical or mechanical defects; defective bicycles; and products that could result in carbon monoxide poisoning.

Staff Idea

The idea for revising the traditional recall process originated with CPSC staffers. They believed a streamlined process would speed up recalls. In addition, they felt that if they spent less time investigating each report, they would have more time to work with firms to ensure more effective recalls. Staff also could investigate other hazards not being reported or reported by companies that had not determined a recall was necessary. Finally, the staff hoped to encourage more firms to report.

A pilot fast-track program was established in the summer of 1995. In addition, a 6-month "amnesty" program from civil penalties was implemented to encourage firms to "clean their closets" of old violations and begin reporting. In March 1997, the fast-track recall program was made permanent.

— Terri Rogers, Office of Compliance

Hammering Away

For its work on the fast-track product recall program, CPSC staff was awarded a "Hammer Award" from Vice President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government. The Hammer Award honors federal employees for significant improvements to customer service and for making the government work more efficiently.

CPSC has won three previous Hammer Awards. These awards were given for outstanding customer service on its telephone hotline; its employee telecommuting program; and participation in the Federal Blue Page Government Listing Project.

Just recently, CPSC was named a semifinalist in the 1998 Innovations in American Government awards program for its fast-track product recall program. The Ford Foundation sponsors the program, which is run by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government.

Consumer Product Incident Report

Please contact us about any injury or death involving consumer products. Call us toll free at: 1-800-638-8095. Visit our web site at www.cpsc.gov. Or, fill out the form below. Send it to: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission/EHDS, Washington, DC 20207 or fax it to: 1-800-809-0924. We may contact you for further details. Please provide as much information as possible. Thank you.

YOUR NAME _____

YOUR ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

YOUR TELEPHONE _____

NAME OF VICTIM (IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

DESCRIBE THE INCIDENT OR HAZARD, INCLUDING DESCRIPTION OF INJURIES _____

VICTIM'S AGE _____ SEX _____ DATE OF INCIDENT _____

DESCRIBE PRODUCT INVOLVED _____

PRODUCT BRAND NAME/MANUFACTURER _____

IS PRODUCT INVOLVED STILL AVAILABLE? YES NO PRODUCT MODEL AND SERIAL NUMBER _____

WHEN WAS THE PRODUCT PURCHASED? _____

This information is collected by authority of 15 U.S.C. 2054 and may be shared with product manufacturers, distributors, or retailers. No names or other personal information, however, will be disclosed without explicit permission.



U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Washington, DC 20207

TC-49

MECAP NEWS

Medical Examiners and Coroners Alert Project and Emergency Physicians Reporting System

The MECAP-EPRS Project is designed to collect timely information on deaths and injuries involving consumer products. Please contact us whenever you encounter a death or situation that you believe should be considered during a safety evaluation of a product.

To report a case or ask for information about MECAP, please call our toll-free number, 1-800-638-8095, or our toll-free fax number, 1-800-809-0924, or send a message via Internet to AMCDONAL@CPSC.GOV.

*Indicates cases selected for CPSC follow-up investigations. Cases reported but not selected for follow-up also are important to CPSC. Every MECAP report is included in CPSC's injury data base and will be used to assess the hazards associated with consumer products.

During the months of November and December 1997 and January 1998, 416 cases were reported to CPSC. Included here are samples of cases to illustrate the type and nature of the reported incidents.

ASPHYXIATIONS/ SUFFOCATIONS

A male, 15 months, was put to sleep on an adult bed. The bed had a wrought iron headboard and footboard. The child was found unresponsive with his neck wedged in the iron work of the footboard. His head was facing inside toward the mattress, and his body was hanging outside. The cause of death was hanging. (Donna Price for Leah Bush, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, Tidewater District, Norfolk, VA)

A female, 13 months, was placed to sleep in the center of an adult bed. A lamp was on a shelf near the bed. The child was found with the lamp cord wrapped around her neck. The cause of death was asphyxiation. (Kathy Barbey for George E. Bolduc, M.D., Associate Medical Examiner, Snohomish County, Everett, WA)

*A male, 7 months, was placed to sleep in a crib. His mother returned one hour later and found the victim wedged between the mattress frame and the crib's side rail. A pin in the mattress frame had come loose, allowing the child to slip down and become wedged between the crib parts. The cause of death was asphyxia. (Jeffery Jentzen, M.D., Medical Examiner, Milwaukee County, Milwaukee, WI)

*A female, 6 months, was placed to sleep on an adult bed. She was found with her face wedged between the head of the bed and the wall. The cause of death was mechanical asphyxia. (Angelo K.

Ozoa, M.D., Ph.D., Medical Examiner, Santa Clara County, San Jose, CA)

POISONINGS

*A male, 47, was using a wall-vented propane heater. The heater malfunctioned, causing the room to fill with fumes. The cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning. (Chris Leja for Thomas Gilchrist, M.D., Medical Examiner, Farmington, CT)

A male, 27, was repairing a vacation home which his parents recently purchased. He was overcome by carbon monoxide due to an improperly vented furnace. The cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning. (Kathrine Descheneaux for Michael Sikirica, M.D., Medical Examiner, Concord, NH)

*A male, 40, died and his wife and two daughters were hospitalized when the exhaust from the furnace entered their home rather than venting up the chimney. The furnace was found to be partially disconnected and almost totally clogged with ash and soot. The cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning. (Gregory A. Schmunk, M.D., Medical Examiner, Brown County, Green Bay, WI)

A male, 84, died when his furnace malfunctioned. The victim knew the furnace was not running properly, but refused to let his children arrange for repairs. The cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning. (Jeffrey Jentzen, M.D., Medical Examiner, Milwaukee County, Milwaukee, WI)

FIRES

*A male, 18 months, died from injuries suffered in a house fire when gasoline fumes caused a water heater to explode. The victim survived four months after the explosion with third-degree burns over 90% of his body. The cause of death was burns and smoke inhalation. (Sophia Trevino for William E. Korndorffer, M.D., Medical Examiner, Galveston County, Texas City, TX)

*A male, 82, was attempting to start a power lawn mower when it exploded, catching the victim's clothes on fire. The victim survived two months in the burn unit of the hospital, but eventually developed pneumonia which led to his death. The cause of death was 40% total body surface area burns, sepsis, and pneumonia. (Nancy Moore for John Butts, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, Chapel Hill, NC)

*A female, 18, died in a house fire caused by an electric blanket shorting out. The cause of death was inhalation of products of combustion. (Gregory A. Schmunk, M.D., Medical Examiner, Brown County, Green Bay, WI)

Two females, ages 79 and 80, died in a house fire ignited by an electric space heater placed too close to combustibles. The cause of death was smoke inhalation. (Dennis Bullock for Leslie Lukash, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, Nassau County, NY)

*A male, 23, died in a house fire caused by a faulty microwave oven. The oven fire caused a wooden table to ignite. The fire then proceeded to engulf the house. The cause of death was smoke inhalation. (David R. Schomburg for Susan Ely, M.D., Medical Examiner and Charles Hirsh, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, New York, NY)

A male, 69, was welding a vehicle in a detached garage at his home. An explosion and fire occurred when the opened flame torch came too close to combustibles. The victim suffered 11% total body surface burns. The cause of death was smoke and soot inhalation. (Mo Lupia for Samuel A. Livingstone, M.D., Assistant Medical Examiner and Sigmund Menchel, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, Onondaga County, Syracuse, NY)

A female, 9, was the victim of a house fire caused by a faulty extension cord. The cause of death was smoke and soot inhalation. (Delores Butler for Sajid Laiser, M.D., Medical Examiner, Philadelphia, PA)

A mother and her two children, 4 and 3, died in a trailer fire caused by the 3-year-old playing with a cigarette lighter. The father was sleeping on the living room couch and awoke when he heard the child, age 4, shouting that the 3-year-old had started the fire. The father was able to escape from the trailer. The cause of death was asphyxiation by inhalation of smoke and carbon monoxide. (Diane Stepan for Robb Boggs, Medical Examiner, Multnomah County, Portland, OR)

ELECTROCUTIONS

* A male, 32, was electrocuted by a heating pad he was using. The heating pad showed burn marks around the edge adjacent to the control device. The cause of death was electrocution with torso and arm burns. (Chris Leja for Edward McDonough, M.D., Medical Examiner, Farmington, CT)

A male, 56, was installing an outside light at his home. When he went under the house to connect the wire to the household electrical

system, he was electrocuted. His brother found the victim, with pliers still in his hand and extensive electrical and thermal burns on the fingers and thumbs of both hands. The cause of death was electrocution. (Nancy Moore for Charles L. Garrett, M.D., Medical Examiner, Onslow County, and John Butts, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, Chapel Hill, NC)

MISCELLANEOUS

A male, 80, was using a chain saw to cut wood. The saw kicked back, striking him in the neck. The cause of death was laceration to the neck area. (Barbara Gage for James Beyer, M.D., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Northern Virginia, Fairfax, VA)

A female, 12, was riding her bike with a friend. She was not wearing a bike helmet. As the victim rode around a bend, she yelled to her friend that she was having trouble with the bike's brakes. The road was wet from rain. The victim struck two trees and was found lying on the ground, unresponsive. The cause of death was multiple blunt force injuries. (Ronald V. Suarez, M.D., Medical Examiner, Morris County, NJ)

*A male, 64, was grinding a knife blade in a workshop in his home. The knife was thrown from the grinder, striking the victim in the skull and puncturing his brain. The victim removed the knife himself and walked to his house. He told his wife he was hurt and collapsed. The cause of death was craniocerebral injuries. (Zia Sabet, M.D., Chief Pathologist and R.C. Payne, M.D., Medical Examiner, South Charleston, WV)

— *Suzanne Newman*,
Directorate for Epidemiology
and Health Sciences



CPSC Recalls

Product: About 86,000 Gerry Clear Choice Model 618 **rechargeable baby monitors**. The recalled monitors consist of a “baby” unit, a “parent” unit, a recharging base for the parent unit, and AC adapters. All of the units are white with a light blue accent color. The model number is on a silver plate on the front of the monitor’s AC adapter. Because it houses the battery, only the parent unit presents the hazard. Mass merchandise and baby stores nationwide sold the baby monitors from April 1996 to March 1998 for about \$40.

Problem: When an electric short occurs, the rechargeable battery can cause the monitor’s parent unit to smoke and flame. Gerry has one report of flames and four reports of smoke coming from the parent unit. No injuries or property damage have been reported.

What to do: Disconnect and throw away the blue battery pack from the parent unit immediately and call Gerry at 1-800-273-3521 to receive a free replacement black battery pack with safety fuse.

Product: About 1.6 million Duracraft brand Heat Express® and 8,000 DeLonghi brand **portable ceramic heaters** distributed by Honeywell Consumer Products. The recalled heaters are Duracraft Heat Express® models CZ-303, CZ-304, CZ-308, CZ-318 and CZ-319 and DeLonghi model CER-1. The model number is on a silver sticker on the bottom of the heater. The 1500 watt heaters are colored black with control knobs located on the top or front of the unit. “Heat Express®” and “Duracraft®” or “DeLonghi” appear on the front of the heater. Discount stores, home centers, club stores, and catalogue showrooms nationwide sold the Duracraft heaters from January 1989 through March 1998 for about \$50 to \$75. The DeLonghi heaters were sold from January 1989 through December 1990.

Problem: The heaters can overheat, presenting a fire hazard. Honeywell has 56 reports of heaters overheating or catching fire, causing one minor injury. Some of the fires relating to the heaters caused extensive damage.

What to do: Stop using these recalled heaters and call Honeywell at 1-800-632-9498 for a free replacement heater.

Product: About 150,000 Duracraft and Honeywell **humidifiers**. The recalled products are Duracraft model DH-950 Moisture Select™ and Honeywell model HCW-3040 Moisture Select™ humidifiers. The model number is on the bottom of the humidifier. Each humidifier is white, has a tank that holds about two gallons, and has control knobs and two output vents (cold moisture and warm moisture) on the top. “Duracraft” or “Honeywell” appears between the output vents. Discount stores, home centers, club stores, and catalogue showrooms nationwide sold the humidifiers from May 1995 through March 1998 for about \$50 to \$80.

Problem: The humidifiers can overheat, presenting a fire hazard. Honeywell has six reports of humidifiers overheating or catching fire.

What to do: Stop using these recalled humidifiers and call Honeywell at 1-800-632-9498 for a free replacement heater.

Product: About 1.2 million Ryobi and Craftsman brand **detail sanders**. The recalled models are Ryobi DS1000 with last four digits of the serial number between 9318 and 9718 and Craftsman models 315.11600 and 315.11639 with date codes A4001 through A9717. The model numbers are on a data plate on the side of the sander. Major home centers and hardware stores as well as local hardware stores sold these sanders nationwide from May 1993 through March 1998. Sears sold the Craftsman sanders from October 1994 through March 1998. Both brands sold for about \$35 to \$40.

Problem: If the sander is left plugged in and the on/off switch is not fully in the “off” position, pressure from the switch’s dust boot can force the switch into the “on” position, creating a potential fire hazard. Ryobi has three reports of fires possibly caused by these sanders. No injuries were reported.

What to do: Always unplug the sander when it is not in use. Call Ryobi at 1-800-867-9624 for a free repair or replacement.

Product: About 1,800 Sunbeam Grillmaster™ **gas grills** with side burners. The recalled grills are models GG461 EPB, GG 560 EPB, HG 560 EPB, and GG 560 EPBS. Complete model numbers are on the instructions and parts list. Either “461” or “560” is located on the front of the grill under the word “Grillmaster.” Mass merchandise stores sold the grills nationwide from October 1997 to February 1998 for about \$240.

Problem: The side burner propane gas hose can twist up toward the aluminum grill casting, causing overheating and melting of the hose. Gas leakage or fire could result. Sunbeam has four complaints of damaged, overheated hoses. There have been no reports of gas leakage, fires, or injuries.

What to do: Stop using these grills and call Sunbeam at 1-888-892-8150 for a free repair kit that will properly position the propane gas hose.

Product: About 15,000 Relaxor®, Deep Knead™ Shiatsu **back massagers** distributed by JB Research, Inc. The massagers come in black or gray tweed fabric and in two sizes: a seat topper and a larger seat lounger. “Relaxor” is on the front of the unit which has elastic straps to attach it to a chair. Each comes with an AC plug-in/auto adapter and a control wand. Only units that have both the words “Deep Knead” on the front of the control wand and the model number JDK46H with serial numbers from 000001 to 020000 on the back of the control wand are recalled. Specialty stores, including The Sharper Image, Brookstone, and Nordic Track, sold the massagers nationwide from October through December 1997 for about \$200 to \$260.

Problem: The motor for the massager’s Deep Knead mechanism can overheat, scorch the foam and fabric back of the unit, and present a potential fire hazard. JB Research has 46 reports of units overheating. No fires or injuries were reported.

What to do: Stop using the massager and call JB Research at 1-800-771-5792 for free replacement unit.

— Marc Schoem and Terri Rogers, Office of Compliance



NHTSA Recalls

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is the government agency responsible for improving safety on the nation's highways. As part of its efforts to achieve this goal, NHTSA is authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment (including air bags and child safety seats).

The following safety recall campaigns are some of the recalls currently being conducted in cooperation with NHTSA. For more information about NHTSA recall activities, you can access NHTSA on the Internet at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov> or by calling the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236).

American Honda Motors Corporation

American Honda is recalling 33,966 1998 Accord and Acura CL cars. During manufacturing, the casting die caused an irregularity in the right-side transmission cover. This irregularity can limit the movement of the parking pawl actuation lever, preventing engagement of the parking gear pawl. If the parking pawl is not engaged as expected, the car could roll down an incline, increasing the risk of injury. Owners who do not receive the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Honda at 1-800-999-1009 or Acura at 1-800-382-2238. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V018)

Chrysler Corporation

Chrysler is recalling about 225,000 1990-1991 Jeep Cherokee, Wrangler, Comanche, 1993 Jeep Grand Cherokee sport utility vehicles and 1989-1991 Eagle Premier and Dodge Monaco cars originally sold or are currently registered in one of the following states: Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, or Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. The front disc brake rotors can experience severe corrosion if operated for an extensive period in the "salt belt." If the rotors are not replaced, the corrosion will reduce the structural strength of the stamped steel hub section, increasing the likelihood of the cast iron section separating from the hub. Reduced brake effectiveness increases the potential for a vehicle crash. Owners who do not receive the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Chrysler at 1-800-992-1997. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V005/Chrysler Recall No. 747)

Approximately 91,544 1995 Cirrus and Dodge Stratus vehicles manufactured from July 1994 through May 1996 are being recalled because some of the rear seat belt anchors do not meet the loading requirements of FMVSS No. 210, "Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages." Failure of a seat belt anchor will result in the loss of seat belt protection, increasing the likelihood of serious injury or death in a crash. Owners who do not receive the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Chrysler at 1-800-992-1997. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V063/Chrysler Recall No. 772)

Ford Motor Company

Ford is recalling 320,000 1997-1998 Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer sport utility vehicles equipped with 4.0L single overhead cam engines and manufactured August 1996 through February 1998. The engine fuel lines can be damaged if the vehicle is jump started and the ground cable is attached to the fuel line bracket that is located near the battery. Since the bracket is not grounded, the stainless steel fuel line braid would act as a ground potentially overheating the plastic inner liner of the fuel line. The fuel lines can then leak and, in the presence of an ignition source, result in a fire. Owners who do not receive the free owner guide inserts and directions should contact Ford at 1-800-392-3673. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V060/Ford No. 98S09)

Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America, Inc.

Mitsubishi is recalling about 20,974 1998 Spyder and Eclipse vehicles manufactured from July 1997 through January 1998. The dash panel pad can shift, interfering with the throttle cable control. When this occurs, the throttle will not return to idle, increasing the risk of a vehicle crash. Owners who do not receive the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Mitsubishi at 1-800-222-0037. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V045001/Mitsubishi Recall No. 98XWNS0073)

About 24,175 1990-1998 Eclipse vehicles manufactured from July 1989 through March 1998 are being recalled because lockup of the transfer case can occur due to insufficient lubrication. This condition can cause a loss of vehicle control, increasing the risk of a crash. Owners who do not receive the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Mitsubishi at 1-800-222-0037. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V069)

Subaru of America, Inc.

Subaru is recalling 61,115 1997 Legacy and Outback vehicles manufactured from August 1996 through March 1997 because the throttle shaft ball bearing on the sensor side of the throttle body assembly was not installed in certain throttle bodies. Operation of a vehicle with a missing throttle shaft bearing can eventually lead to an incomplete return of the throttle valve resulting in a high idling condition. Dealers will inspect the throttle body and replace the throttle assembly if the bearing is missing. Owners who do not receive the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Subaru at 1-800-782-2783. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V035)

Toyota Motor Corporation

Toyota is recalling 47,525 1995-1997 Lexus LS400 and 1996-1997 Lexus SC400 vehicles manufactured from April 1995 through June 1997. Due to improper assembly of the terminal for the starter motor magnetic switch, an electrical short circuit can occur if electrically-conductive liquid, such as road splash with deicing salt, enters this area. A starter motor no-start condition or an underhood fire can result. Dealers will repair the magnetic switch. Owners who do not receive the free remedy within a reasonable time should contact Toyota at 1-800-331-4331. (NHTSA Recall No. 98V016)

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