

***Consumer Federation of America *Consumers Union ***
*** Independent Safety Consulting *Kids in Danger ***
*** Parents for Window Blind Safety ***

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Consumer Advocates Applaud Tri-Lateral Announcement to Eliminate Hazards Posed by Window Blinds: Urge Action Steps to Ensure Success

Washington, DC—Yesterday the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Health Canada and Directorate General for Health and Consumers of the European Commission announced a tri-lateral effort to eliminate hazards posed by corded window coverings.

“We applaud the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Health Canada and DG Sanco for taking this important precedent-setting step to eliminate the strangulation risk posed by window coverings with accessible cords,” stated Linda Kaiser, President and Founder of Parents for Window Blind Safety. “A solution that prevents injuries and deaths to children caused by these products is long overdue.”

In a letter to standards development organizations in the United States, Canada and the European Union; CPSC, Health Canada and DG SANCO called for “stronger standards that eliminate the risk factors causing child death and injuries” from window blinds and also stated their support for “a swift and comprehensive process that concurrently eliminates the risk factors causing deaths and injuries from all types of corded window covering products.”

“CPSC staff and CPSC leadership are prioritizing child safety in announcing their call to eliminate hazards posed by corded window coverings,” states Nancy Cowles, Executive Director of Kids in Danger. “We must take real action to prevent the monthly deaths caused by these products.”

According to CPSC, there are 120 reported fatalities and 113 injuries caused by corded window coverings since 1999. Other studies have shown, however, that many incidents go unreported and in reality, a child dies every two weeks after strangling in the cords of window coverings. The injuries from corded window coverings are severe: some suffer permanent and debilitating brain damage.

“Despite decades-old industry standards and educational campaign, children continue to be killed and injured as unsafe window coverings remain for sale and in people’s homes,” stated Don Mays, Senior Director, Product Safety/Technical Policy, Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports® . “CPSC now knows that it cannot rely on the current inadequate voluntary standard that has failed to significantly reduce the rate of deaths and injuries associated with these products.”

“We are optimistic that the CPSC, industry, and consumer representatives can work together to move quickly in a new and effective standard,” stated Carol Pollack Nelson, Ph.D. of Independent Safety Consulting. “Moving quickly is important. Every day, new blinds with dangerous cords are manufactured and installed in consumers’ homes. Every blind that is produced today will remain in American homes for many years to come, perpetuating the hazard. The time to stop the hazard is now. CPSC’s commitment to the immediate development of a new standard that eliminates strangulation hazards on all window coverings is very encouraging.”

Cordless blinds and shades that do not pose strangulation risks to children are available for sale now. The technology needed to manufacture safe blinds and shades already exists. While available, cordless designs are often sold at higher costs than corded blinds, thus discouraging consumers from purchasing safer window coverings.

“This process must begin immediately, must be transparent and must include consumer as well as other stakeholders from the earliest stages of this standards process,” stated Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel with Consumer Federation of America. “Consumer advocates are ready to work on an international voluntary standard which truly eliminates window coverings with long accessible cords that will save the lives of young children who might otherwise perish or be severely injured while playing or sleeping near corded window coverings.”

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Consumer Federation of America, www.consumerfed.org; Consumers Union, www.consumersunion.org; Kids in Danger, www.kidsindanger.org; Parents for Window Blind Safety, www.pfwbs.org.