



Consumer Federation of America

1620 I Street, N.W., Suite 200 * Washington, DC 20006

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Contact:
Rachel Weintraub, CFA, 202-387-6121
rweintraub@consumerfed.org
Linda Kaiser, PFWBS, 314-494-7890,
linda@pfwbs.org
David Butler, CU, 202-462-6262,
dbutler@consumer.org

WINDOW COVERING MANUFACTURERS STONEWALL EFFECTIVE STANDARDS THAT COULD SAVE CHILDREN'S LIVES

Consumer Organizations Urge Members of the House of Representatives to Reject Misleading Letter and to Call on Industry to Protect Child Safety

Washington D.C. – The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that 12 children die each year from strangling in cords on window coverings, a rate that hasn't changed since 1983 despite industry claims of ever-improving safety standards. Further, since 1999, CPSC is aware of 140 incidents, most of which resulted in serious injuries to children. This rate hasn't changed since 1983 despite what the industry claims as ever-improving safety standards. In fact, many window blind-related deaths were caused by window coverings that actually complied with the industry's weak safety standards. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Health Canada, and the EU's DG Sanco have all called on manufacturers to effectively address the strangulation risk from corded window coverings.

This week Representative Nunnelee is circulating a sign on letter to the House of Representatives that mischaracterizes window covering safety, the window covering voluntary standards process and the role of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Today, consumer groups sent a [letter](#) to the House of Representatives along with a [fact sheet](#) to set the record straight on window covering safety.

“Unfortunately, Representative Nunnelee has mischaracterized the Window Covering Manufacturer's actions in a letter that we urge Members of the House of Representatives not to support,” stated Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel for Consumer Federation of America. “The voluntary standard process is not yet complete but is highly flawed. WCMA continues to fail to address the strangulation hazard posed by corded window coverings in the current draft standard and has not adequately responded to the numerous negative comments it has received.”

While industry claims that there is “no universal technological solution” to address the strangulation hazards posed by corded window blinds, they continue to reject any solution. “A solution is simple and available: eliminate accessible cords or make cords inaccessible from manufactured blinds and shades. The standard does not have to include a universal fix, it can

easily apply to some products and not to others. Parents for Window Blind Safety has pressed for the elimination or covering of dangerous operational cords, not of entire product lines. We support and have put our seal of approval on some products that have already developed innovative ways to make operational cords inaccessible to children. Window coverings without accessible cords have been available for years,” states Linda Kaiser, President of Parents for Window Blind Safety. “Nevertheless, the Window Covering Manufacturers Association (WCMA) has come out fighting this simple requirement even though the children of their customers continue to die,” continued Kaiser.

Fifty-eight percent of strangulations occur on horizontal blind cords. Fixing horizontal blinds would lead to a 60% decrease in deaths and injuries. While there is a readily available fix that works for horizontal blinds, WCMA has chosen not to include it in their own voluntary industry standard.

“The WCMA standard lags behind existing technology to address the strangulation hazard. There is no excuse for WCMA’s latest inadequate draft standard,” stated Carol Pollack-Nelson, PhD, Human Factors Psychologist.

Consumer groups participated in the WCMA voluntary standards process as part of a steering committee but took the unusual step of abandoning the process in September of 2011 after it was clear that consumer suggestions were being ignored and information was being withheld. Consumer groups had pressed WCMA to address the strangulation hazard and to separate custom from stock products which would allow for the most dangerous products, horizontal blinds, to be addressed first. The WCMA denied consumer group suggestions.

Instead, the industry continues to attack the problem itself, claiming that it is not as serious as other hazards posed to children. There are hundreds of families whose lives have been upended by a window blind death or serious injury who do believe that it is a serious hazard. The industry also continues to attack CPSC, the government agency whose mission is to protect the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death. WCMA is fiercely resisting the CPSC’s call to address the strangulation risk. Citing the adequacy of their own voluntary safety standards, the unreasonableness of CPSC’s call to eliminate the hazard, and the cost associated with producing cordless options, WCMA steadfastly refuses to meaningfully modify the industry standard. “This problem has persisted for 30 years, yet the industry keeps focusing its efforts on talking around the problem, and we need them to focus on finding a solution,” said Ioana Rusu, Regulatory Counsel at Consumers Union, the policy and advocacy division of Consumer Reports.

The loops formed by cords on window coverings have strangled at least 45 American children in the last three years alone. Consumers, retailers, and international government safety agencies are all demanding a solution that solves this problem. “Instead of spending time and money to thwart necessary safety improvements, the industry should be investing in the development of innovative solutions that will end infant and toddler strangulation on window blind cords,” said Weintraub. “We need to address all that we can now and not just watch as injuries and deaths continue to occur when there is a solution available,” concluded Kaiser.

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