



Consumer Federation of America

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CONTACT: Susan Peschin (202) 939-1017

Remington's "Safety Modification Program" Inadequate for Protecting Consumers

Latest Proof of Need to End Gun Industry's Unique Lack of Health and Safety Regulation

WASHINGTON, DC—Remington Arms' announcement Wednesday of a voluntary "safety modification program" affecting millions of pre-1982 bolt-action rifles is inadequate for protecting consumers and is the latest proof of the need for comprehensive federal health and safety regulation of the gun industry, Consumer Federation of America (CFA) stated today. Guns and tobacco are the only consumer products not subject to federal health and safety regulation. No federal agency can require a recall of defective firearms.

The Remington Arms Company, of Madison, North Carolina, issued its "safety modification program" Wednesday in response to the death of Gus Barber, who was unintentionally shot by his mother less than a year and-a-half ago as she was unloading her Remington Model 700 bolt-action rifle. Unlike the standard recall practices of federally regulated products, Remington's voluntary action does not use the word "recall," does not adequately warn consumers of the serious safety hazard present in the weapon, is good for only nine months, and charges consumers \$20.

The Remington Model 700 is one of the best selling bolt-action rifles in America. Yet, reported cases have indicated that the rifle may fire unintentionally when the safety is released, but also upon bolt movement or merely as a result of jarring the firearm. Remington has been involved in at least 100 death and injury claims, and thousands of malfunction complaints.

"This so-called 'safety modification program' comes after years of complaints against Remington, including at least 100 deaths and injuries," said Susan Peschin, Firearms Project Director at CFA. "Because America's gun industry is unregulated, consumers have no recourse when there is a safety problem other than using the court system after someone has already been injured or killed," stated Peschin.

Other firearms contain known design or manufacturing defects making them likely to unintentionally discharge. For example, more than 600 people, including children, have been killed or injured by unintentional discharges from Sturm, Ruger & Company's Old Model Single Action Revolver, manufactured from 1953 until 1972.

Remington's "safety modification program" is inadequate as a consumer product recall for the following reasons:

- Remington does not use the word "recall" in its message to consumers. Remington calls its campaign a "safety modification program." The word "recall" should be used to let consumers know that 1) the product may be defective and 2) the problem is serious enough to warrant return and/or repair of the product.

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- Consumers are not adequately warned that the guns present a serious safety hazard. The safety message reads, "Remington is aware of reports that rifles with this feature have accidentally discharged while being unloaded, and whenever a gun fires accidentally, there is a risk of property damage, serious injury or death." Although it mentions the risk of death and injury, it does not reveal that there have been a number of reported cases of deaths and injuries involving the weapon.
- The program is time-limited. The offer is only valid for nine months, through December 31, 2002. Most recalls of products subject to federal oversight are unlimited.
- The program charges consumers. According to its website, Remington is charging consumers \$20 for "cleaning, inspection and removal of the bolt-lock, plus shipping and handling." The program offers a \$20 transferable coupon for consumers toward the purchase of Remington safety products. Recall programs should be free to consumers and should not be tied to future product purchase.

"Remington's so-called 'safety modification program' is unfortunately too little too late," said Peschin. "The gun industry should spend as much time, effort and money on recalls as it does on marketing to consumers. At this point, Remington's program appears to be geared more toward public relations than public safety," concluded Peschin.

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CFA is a non-profit association of 300 pro-consumer groups that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through advocacy and education.