

LOG OF MEETING

SUBJECT: Smoke Detectors

DATE: June 6, 1996

PLACE: Consumer Product Safety Commission, Bethesda, MD

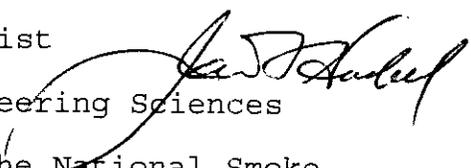
## COMMISSION ATTENDEES:

Ann Brown, Chairman  
 Thomas Moore, Commissioner  
 Andrew Stadnik  
 Andrew Ulsamer  
 Warren Prunella  
 James F. Hoebel  
 Margaret Neily  
 Linda Smith  
 Eleanor Perry  
 Chuck Smith  
 Julie Ayres  
 Ross Koester  
 Mai Ngo  
 Ellen Schmidt  
 Anna Luo

NON-COMMISSION ATTENDEES: See attached list

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: James F. Hoebel, Engineering Sciences

SUMMARY: This was the final meeting of the National Smoke Detector Project Steering Committee. The Project was established in 1990 to address the problem of smoke detectors that do not work, creating a risk of injury and death in residential fires. The project was organized into four operating committees. The Investigations Committee was to study the extent of non-working detectors and determine the major causes. The Codes and Standards Committee was to encourage the expansion and improvement of codes and standards to require working detectors. The Technology Committee was to help stimulate technology to solve identified non-working detector problems. The Consumer Awareness Committee was to develop updated consumer messages to better inform and educate consumers. The membership of the Steering Committee included representatives of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the U.S. Fire Administration, the National Fire Protection Association, the Congressional Fire Services Institute, and the Chairpersons of the four operating Committees. Participants in the project included virtually every organization and individual concerned with smoke detectors. This public-private partnership included the fire services, Federal agencies involved in fire and injury prevention, consumer groups, business and industry, community organizations, codes and standard groups, home builders, insurance groups, and others.




The agenda for the meeting is attached. Presentations were made from each of the four Committees, highlighting accomplishments, status, and outstanding issues. Considerable discussion ensued.

Major findings of the Project included:

- Overall, smoke detectors have contributed substantially to the decline in the number of residential fire deaths in the United States.
- While 11 million households have no smoke detectors, an even greater number, 16 million, have detectors that don't work.
- Only about 7 out of 10 households have at least one working detector. About 3 in 10 households have non-working detectors or none at all.
- Detectors do not work in about 1 out of 5 households that have a detector installed.
- Low-income households are more likely to have no working detectors.
- Reasons for non-working detectors include disconnection due to unwanted or nuisance alarms, dead or missing batteries, debris buildup, and component failure because of age, corrosion, or other reasons. Factors associated with nuisance alarms include detector type, location, and contamination. Removal of batteries for other uses was seldom identified.
- Changes to the Underwriters Laboratories' smoke detector standard were proposed to improve detector reliability and remove impediments to essential consumer maintenance practices. For example, a requirement was recommended for a convenient mechanism to temporarily silence a nuisance alarm, to reduce any tendency for consumers to remove the battery.
- Most States have codes requiring smoke detectors: States lacking such codes were identified.
- There has been a recent resurgence in research to address problems identified by the Project. An example is the recent introduction of long-life detector batteries. Research toward a new generation of detectors that applies electronic logic to sort out more than one fire indicator before alarming holds great promise of virtually eliminating the nuisance alarm problem.

- Consumer awareness messages were redefined and expanded to better target the identified problems of non-working detectors. Continued use of basic messages on installation, periodic testing, and battery replacement was recommended, in addition to two new messages addressing options for dealing with nuisance alarms and need to replace ten year old detectors.
- Local community-based consumer awareness approaches were recommended to target low-income households.
- Program participants installed or gave away more than one million smoke detectors, primarily in low income households.
- A major benefit of the National Smoke Detector Project was the unique opportunity for experts from different constituencies representing varying disciplines to work together toward a common goal. This resulted in a more effective definition of the problem and creative implementation of future solutions.

At the conclusion of the Steering Committee meeting, the consensus of participants was to find some way to continue this forum.

## SIGN-IN SHEET

## NATIONAL SMOKE DETECTOR PROJECT

June 6, 1996, CPSC, Bethesda, MD

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Agenda  
National Smoke Detector Project Steering Committee  
June 6, 1996

Hearing Room 420, Consumer Product Safety Commission, 4330 East West Highway, Bethesda, Maryland

I. Welcome	Ann Brown, Chairman, CPSC	9:00am
II. Introduction, Overview of National Smoke Detector Project	Margaret L. Neily, CPSC	9:10
III. Keynote: What Have We Learned About Smoke Detectors?	John R. Hall, Jr., NFPA	9:20
IV. Investigations Committee Overview	Linda E. Smith, CPSC	9:40
A. Operability Survey	Charles L. Smith, CPSC	9:45
B. Fire Incident Study	Linda E. Smith	10:00
C. Contract Research, Horn Corrosion	Julie I. Ayres, CPSC	10:15
D. Discussion	Linda E. Smith	10:30
<b>BREAK</b>		10:45
V. Codes and Standards Committee Overview	James F. Hoebel, CPSC	11:00
A. Current Model Building Code Provisions	Eleanor F. Perry, CPSC	11:05
B. State Legislation Update	Alan Korn, Safe Kids	11:20
C. Discussion	James F. Hoebel	11:35
<b>LUNCH</b>		11:50
VI. Technology Committee Overview	Richard Bukowski, NIST	1:00pm
A. CPSC Proposals to UL 217	Julie I. Ayres	1:05
B. UL 217 Status	Paul Patty, UL	1:20
C. NFPA Status	Richard Bukowski	1:35
D. Current Status of Technology	Richard Bukowski	1:50
E. Discussion	Richard Bukowski	2:05
VII. Consumer Awareness Committee Overview	Christina Rossomando, Associates	2:20
A. CPSC Field Injury Prevention Program	Ross Koeser, CPSC	2:25
B. Native American Studies	Rick Smith, Indian Health Service	2:40
C. Community-Based Programs	Christina Rossomando	2:55
D. Discussion	Christina Rossomando	3:10
<b>BREAK</b>		3:25
VIII. Review of Accomplishments and General Discussion	Margaret L. Neily	3:40
IX. Future Directions, Action Items, Commitments (Panel discussion with input from audience)	Steering Committee J. Hoebel, Moderator	4:00
X. Conclusion and Adjourn	Margaret L. Neily	5:00

Steering Committee

Richard Bukowski, National Institute of Standards and Technology  
Sharon Gamache, National Fire Protection Association  
Edward Klima, Congressional Fire Services Institute  
Margaret Neily, Consumer Product Safety Commission  
John Ottoson, U.S. Fire Administration  
Christina Rossomando, Rossomando & Associates  
Linda Smith, Consumer Product Safety Commission