

**U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
LOG OF MEETING**

SUBJECT: Meeting with Chairman Tenenbaum, Window Covering Manufacturers Association and CPSC Staff

DATE OF MEETING: February 16, 2012

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Dottie Lee

DATE OF LOG ENTRY: February 22, 2012

LOCATION: Room 836, CPSC Headquarters

**CPSC ATTENDEE(S): Chairman Tenenbaum
Matt Howsare, Chief of Staff
Ken Hinson, Executive Director
Dottie Lee, Office of the Chairman
Jason Levine, Chief Legal Counsel - Office of Commissioner Adler
Scott Wolfson, Director of Communications
Chris Day, Director of Legislative Affairs
Robert Howell, Deputy Executive Director - Safety Operations
Rana Balci-Sinha, Office of Compliance
Rena Rauchschalbe, Office of Compliance
Jenilee Keefe-Singer, Office of Legislative Affairs**

**NON-CPSC ATTENDEE(S):
Ed Krenik, Bracewell and Giuliani
Ralph Vasami, WCMA
Tom Merker, Springs WF
Joe Jankoski, Hunter Douglas
Richard Gottuso, Hunter Douglas**

**Mark Johnson, Newell Rubbermaid
Dale Matschullat, Newell Rubbermaid
Pamela Sederholm, Newell Rubbermaid
Paul Nathanson, Bracewell and Giuliani
Derick Marsh, RollEase, Inc
Mike Gidding, Brown and Gidding
William Lynch, Safe-T-Shade
Rachel Weintraub, Consumer Federation of America
Lorraine Gilbert, Bloomberg BNA**

ATTENDEES WHO DIALED IN VIA CONFERENCE CALL:

**Linda Keyser, Parents for Window Blind Safety
Maryann Plumlee, Window Coverings News
David Cross, Belgian Shade Company
Gerry Castellaw, Fabritec, LLC**

SUMMARY OF MEETING: Chairman Tenenbaum and Staff met with members of the Window Covering Manufacturers Association (WCMA) to discuss the window coverings voluntary standard and educational campaigns. WCMA stated that the update to the current voluntary standard is almost complete, and it is performance-based and data-driven. The new standard will also include new warning labels. WCMA projects the new standard to be complete by mid-2012.

WCMA also outlined their public education efforts which include outreach to child safety groups and real estate communities. WCMA stated they will also utilize social media as part of their outreach campaigns.

WCMA stated that in the interim, they have provided retrofit kits for corded window blinds and shades. Chairman Tenenbaum emphasized the need to "design out the risk." CPSC Staff also noted that the retrofit kits had not been updated since 2002.

A copy of WCMA's presentation for this meeting is attached.

Window Covering Manufacturers Association

Meeting with Consumer Products Safety Commission February 2012





Introduction

- **WCMA appreciates the opportunity to brief CPSC on window covering safety issues.**
- **The industry's top priority is the safety of our customers and to engineer and manufacture superior products that meet our customers' demands for performance, choice and safety.**
- **Our goal today is to provide updates on the standard, consumer education program and the retrofit program, to answer your questions, and to discuss a path forward.**



A Three Pronged Approach to Safety

WCMA implements a three pronged approach to window covering safety that includes:

1. Ongoing Review and Updates as Necessary to the ANSI/WCMA safety standard;
2. Industry support and funding of the Window Covering Safety Council's nationwide public education and information campaign; and,
3. Distribution of hundreds of thousands of repair kits to retrofit older and recalled products.



Update: ANSI/WCMA Standard

- The latest update to the ANSI/WCMA standard is almost complete thanks to the diligent work done by the participants in this process.
- WCMA followed all ANSI Essential Requirements for an open and balanced process with public review opportunities.
- CPSC representatives were active and regular partners in the standards process.
- We were disappointed that consumer groups ended their participation on the steering committee before the process was completed. However, WCMA invited these groups to be part of the ANSI canvass and some of them have chosen to participate.
- This is the sixth update to the ANSI/WCMA standard since 1996.
- We believe that the ANSI/WCMA safety standard is now the most stringent in the world.



Draft 2011 Updated Standard – Summary of Changes

Provision	2011 Draft Standard (ANSI canvass underway)
Definitions	<p>The definitions section was expanded and revised to be sure that all products covered in the standard were defined and that all cross references within the document are consistent. Added new definitions to support new performance requirements and test procedures.</p>
Tension Devices	<p>Revises the continuous loop hold down devices by adding requirements for durability and performance testing of the tension/hold down devices. There are operational requirements designed to test the force required to pull the cord or bead chain out of the tension device; UV stability testing of the tension device; impact testing of the tension device; and a durability test of 3,000 cycles to measure the long term strength of the tension device.</p> <p>An additional new requirement calls for specific installation instructions and warnings to address the proper installation of the tension device. A pull-out test from the wall has also been added that includes anchors and hardware.</p>



Draft 2011 Updated Standard – Summary of Changes

Provision	2011 Draft Standard (ANSI canvass underway)
Compliance	Compliance: A new compliance path has been added specifically to address new innovations for controlling a loop cord that doesn't utilize a tension device. These new technologies will have to undergo the same operational tests, UV stability tests, impact tests, and durability (cycle) tests as the tension devices. There is also a test to determine whether the use of these devices can allow for the creation of a hazardous loop.
Wide Lift Band	Performance: New performance requirements have been added for products that rely on "wide lift bands" as part of the operating system to raise and lower a window covering. Minimum widths and material stiffness are defined.
Warning Labels	Warning labels: A warning label and pictogram will be required on the outside of stock packaging and on merchandising materials for custom products on all corded window coverings.



Draft 2011 Updated Standard – Summary of Changes

Provision	2011 Draft Standard (ANSI canvass underway)
Performance Requirement and Test Procedure	Expanded the requirements for accessibility testing to other product categories including those of open back and closed cell construction.
Roman Shades	Expanded the requirements for hazardous loop testing to product types beyond Roman style shades.
Roll Up Style Shades	Added performance requirements and test procedures for Roll Up style shades utilizing a breakaway device.
UV Requirements	New requirements provide details for how to test individual components for UV requirements. This allows for more repeatable results.
Guidance – Fully Assembled Shade	Expanded and revised illustrations of products and provided a table summarizing which components are to be tested on a fully assembled shade. This gives guidance to the test labs and allows for more repeatable results.



Update: Public Education Efforts

A majority of injuries involving window coverings have been and are occurring on older products that don't meet current standards.

- CPSC's own data show more than 75% of incidents occur with older products or on products that were not installed or used in the directed way.

Focusing only on standards that make changes to new products does not adequately address the underlying problem and won't reduce injury rates.

Educating Consumers is Critical for Improving Safety



Update: Public Education Programs

The Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC), a coalition of major U.S. manufacturers, importers and retailers of window coverings dedicated to educating consumers about window cord safety, sponsors a national public education and information campaign to encourage users who have older or recalled window blinds to update their window coverings with new product, repair kits or product retrofits.

- The WCSC website (www.windowcoverings.org) provides information for consumers on window covering safety, including videos, and a mechanism to order the appropriate retrofit kits.
- The WCSC has co-sponsored National Window Covering Safety Month each October for the last 11 years, a nationwide campaign to raise consumer awareness of potential window cord hazards.
- WCMA supports the WCSC invitation to CPSC to renew its participation in this important education program and welcomes the agency's input on ensuring that program activities are effective and reaching their target audiences.



Update: Public Education Programs

The WCSC education program reached an estimated cumulative audience of **1,392,243,514** impressions between January 2010 and December 2010. This number was reached through television, radio, newspaper, consumer & trade magazines and the Web.

The breakdown in audience numbers is as follows:

- An estimated audience of 65,703,710 via television
- An estimated audience of 13,195,511 via radio
- An estimated audience of 187,184,349 via newspaper
- An estimated audience of 17,235,924 via trade and consumer magazines
- An estimated audience of 1,108,924,020 via Web



Free Retrofit Kit Distribution

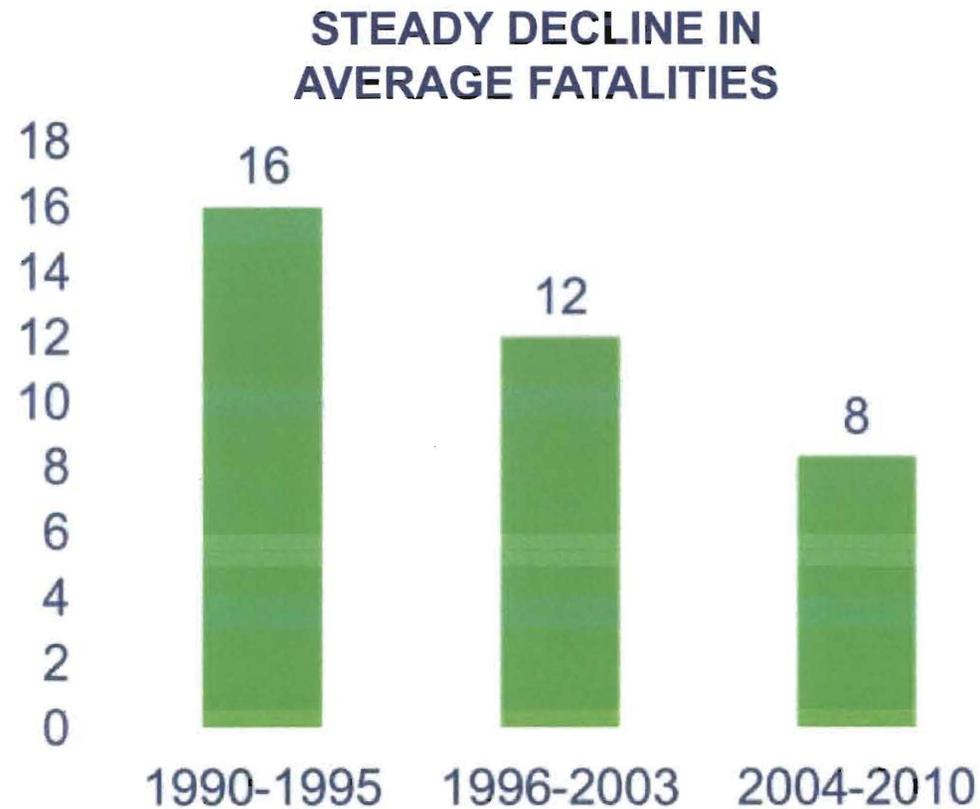
The Window Covering Safety Council provides consumers with free cord stops, tassels and tie-down devices. A safety brochure with retrofit instructions is included with each order.

Retrofit Kits available:

- WCSC-2001 – Tassel kits (Purchased BEFORE 1995)
- WCSC-2002 – Donut kits (Purchased AFTER 1995)
- WCSC-2003 – Vertical kits Roman-style roll up
- WCSC-2009 – Roman Shades
- WCSC-20092 – Roll up Shades and Roller Shades

Since 2007, the industry has distributed more than 400,000 retrofit kits.

The Three-Pronged Approach is Getting Results



Source: Consumer Product Safety Commission

Analysis of CPSC IDIs

- Declines in fatality incidents involving horizontal blinds from 1996-2000 to 2001-2005 and from 2001-2005 to 2006-2010.
- Overall decline in reported incidents of 9% from 1996-2000 (57 incidents) to 2001-2005 (52) and 13% from 2001-2005 (52) to 2006-2010 (45).
- Most incidents during the past 15 years involved “pre-standard” products. (70% of the cases involving conventional cord lift system and 85% of the cases involving continuous loop operating systems.)



Response to CPSC Staff Comments/Statements

- **We appreciate CPSC’s comments to the standard and Chairman Tenenbaum’s focus on ensuring the strongest possible safety standard. We would like to address some of the issues raised:**

No Universal Technological Solution: Window blinds currently sold include corded operating systems, and there simply is not a universal technological solution that exists today that would cover the wide variety of types of window coverings and users, and allow consumers to purchase blinds at a cost comparable to current products. We cannot eliminate proven safety devices that have no replacement on the market.

The industry is committed to mitigating risk factors. The “Elimination of Risk Factors” is not Feasible and Would Result in Banning Cords: There are approximately one billion window covering products already in consumer homes, and human behavior, accidents and misuse of products make the elimination of all risk an impossible standard to meet.

Consumer surveys show that raising costs of safe corded window coverings would undermine safety as it would cause consumers to hold onto their older products that don’t meet current standards.

Consequences of “Elimination of Risk Factors”

- Because of technology and other factors, alternative systems are only available for a portion of the market, and they often add significant cost to the price of the products and are not practical for all consumers.
- Requirements that would effectively lead to a ban on corded products would take safe products out of the market, raise costs for consumers, jeopardize the economic viability of U.S. window covering companies and put the jobs of their employees at risk without delivering significant safety benefits to consumers.



Consumer Behavior

Taking corded window coverings that meet the ANSI/WCMA standard off store shelves would undermine safety as it would cause consumers to hold onto their older products that don't meet current standards. This consumer behavior was confirmed by a recent WCMA survey of 1,000 consumers regarding window covering purchases .

- Consumer responses confirmed that requirements that would effectively lead to a ban on corded products presents the unintended consequence of prolonging the use of pull-cord blinds that do not meet the current standards within U.S. households.
 - Nearly half of households (47%) would either delay replacing existing pull-cord blinds or buy new pull-cord blinds before the regulations went into effect.
 - 40% of households with children would be discouraged against replacing current blinds or encouraged to purchase pull-cord blinds at an affordable price while they still can.



CPSC Comments to Proposed Standard

- WCMA received CPSC comments on the draft standard on Friday, February 10. These comments are being reviewed by the Technical Review Committee.
- It should be noted that the elimination of tension devices and the restriction of operating cord lengths still present major technological challenges to the various types and styles of corded window covering products covered within the standard.

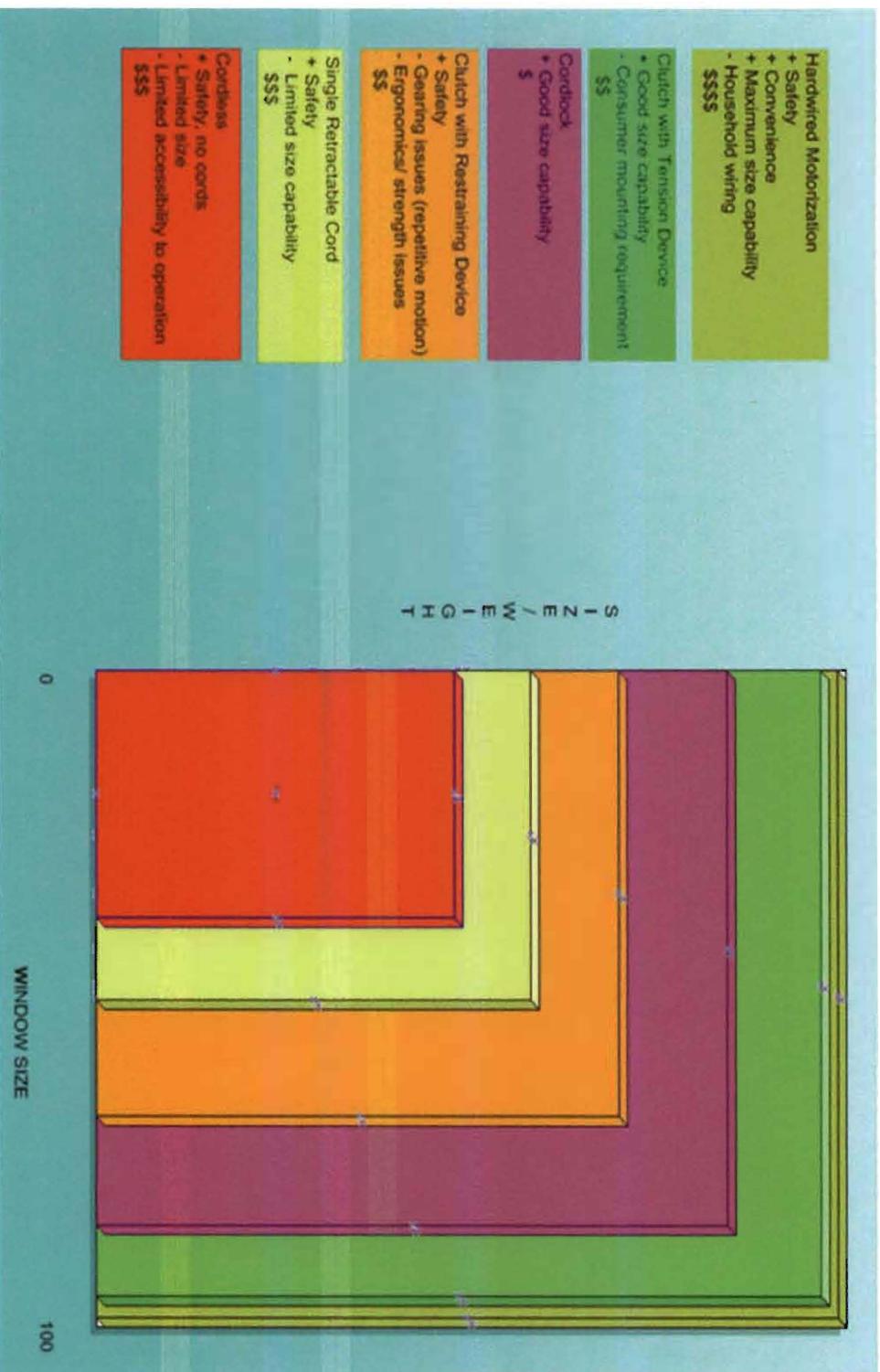
Cordless Operating Systems Technical Limitations

- Technology is applicable to only 30% of potential window blind configurations.
- Relies on adding springs and then using weights or a brake to fine tune the balance of the product so it doesn't creep or sag. Process is complicated by raw material variation and product weight.
- Need to use more springs to drive forces down to ensure the product will not creep or sag over time.
- The size of the springs, spools, shafts, etc. takes up a lot of space compared to a cord lock system, limiting shallow depth solutions. (Blinds will not fit in most current window openings)
- Springs must be tightly controlled as variation over time will cause the product to cease functioning properly.
- Must balance cost, function and desirability for the consumer.
- Cut down, in-store changes alter the weight after manufacturing and limit the size of the components that can be used.

Cordless Operating Systems User Limitations

- Requires physical consumer contact with product to operate. This can be difficult if consumer cannot reach the product or it is obstructed by furniture.
- Requires forces to lift and lower the product ranging from 3 – 15 lbs. for an average product depending on the specifics of the design and construction materials. For heavier products that are 72" x 72", the forces required can exceed 30 lbs. (Larger products would be higher).
- A comfortable lift for most adults is approximately 7lbs.
- As the operating system becomes more complex, the user ability to make in-home adjustments becomes increasingly limited.

Operating Systems and Window Size





Multiple Product Categories and Operating Systems

	Verticals	Wood	Nat Shades	Roller shades	Faux wood	Mini blinds	Pleated	Cellular	Roman	Draperies
Cord Lift										
Continuous loop										
Cordless/ Baton draw										
Motor										
Retractable cord										



Available Operating Systems - Custom Products

	Verticals	Wood	Nat Shades	Roller shades	Faux wood	Mini blinds	Pleated	Cellular	Roman	Draperies
Cord Lift		X	X		X	X	X	X		
Continuous loop	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cordless/ Baton draw	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Motor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Retractable cord				X				X		

Primary Operating Systems - Custom Products



	Verticals	Wood	Nat Shades	Roller shades	Faux wood	Mini blinds	Pleated	Cellular	Roman	Draperies
Cord Lift		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Continuous loop	X		X	X				X	X	X
Cordless/ Baton draw	X							X		X
Motor										
Retractable cord										

Available and Primary Operating Systems - Stock Products



	Verticals	Wood	Nat Shades	Roller shades	Faux wood	Mini blinds	Pleated	Cellular	Roman	Draperies
Cord Lift		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Continuous loop										X
Cordless/ Baton draw	X			X				X		X
Motor										
Retractable cord										



PILOT ALIGNMENT INITIATIVE

- WCMA appreciates the efforts of Canada, the EU, Australia and CPSC to align safety requirements for corded window coverings.
- As previously stated, the ANSI/WCMA voluntary standard in the U.S. is already the toughest window coverings safety standard in the world.
- It should be noted that several elements in the EU and Australian standards have not been accepted by CPSC staff including the concept of a “safety zone”, cord cleats and breakaway devices on operating cords.
- We look forward to working with the safety agencies of all jurisdictions involved in this effort.

Summary

- There is no universal technological solution that exists today that would cover the wide variety of custom-made, made-to measure and stock types of window coverings.
- The incident rate has declined even as the number of window covering products in homes has continued to grow.
- The ANSI standard addresses all products, in all possible variations, with no exceptions. The standard provides multiple options for achieving compliance without outlawing or mandating any particular technology or solution.
- A majority of injuries involving window coverings are occurring on older products that don't meet current standards. This is an area where all interested groups can and should focus more effort to find solutions.



A Way Forward

A three pronged approach has proven to be the best way to address these products:

- Working with the CPSC, the industry has strengthened the standard six times and the latest version out for canvass is the strongest it's ever been.
- Through the WCSC the industry is committed to educating consumers on window blind cord safety.
- The retrofit program continues to improve safety by updating window coverings at no extra cost to the consumer.

We are looking for innovative ways to partner with retailers and CPSC to encourage consumers to replace older products.

We want to continue working with the CPSC towards our common vision of reducing injury rates, and believe that following this approach will have the most impact.