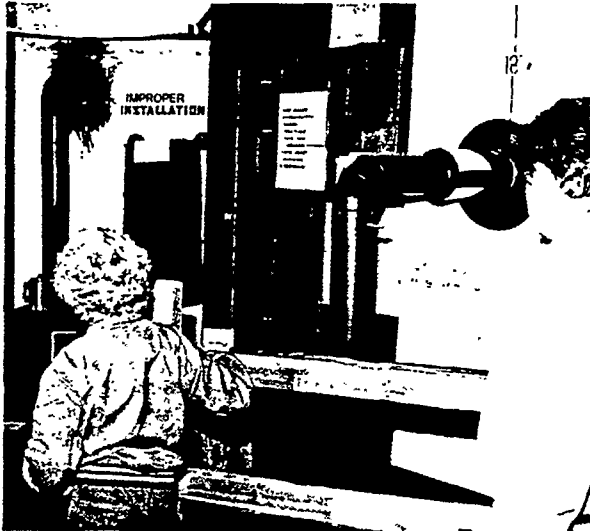


cpsc memo

JANUARY
1980

FROM THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207



An exhibit on wood burning safety was sponsored by the Twin Cities Area Office at the Minnesota State Fair. More than 1 million persons attended the Fair. The exhibit included examples of properly and improperly installed wood burning stoves and a slide series. More than 5,000 written requests for safety brochures were received following the showing of the display.

COMMISSION URGES PUBLIC TO 'SAVE ENERGY SAFELY'

Since cheap fuel is no longer available, consumers are being hit by a barrage of suggestions and advertisements about energy-saving products. CPSC has its own message to consumers who are buying energy conserving devices such as space heaters, coal and wood burning stoves, thermal insulation, bicycles, and gasoline containers. That message is: **SAVE ENERGY SAFELY.**

The Commission supports energy conservation efforts while it emphasizes that consumers should be aware of the hazards that may accompany the use of some energy-related products.

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FY '79 MAY BE CPSC'S 'MOST PRODUCTIVE' YEAR

Fiscal year 1979 may prove to be the Consumer Product Safety Commission's most productive year.

Product investigations and recalls under Section 15 of the Consumer Product Safety Act affected 53.4 million products involving 198 separate actions for the 1979 fiscal year. Since 1974, approximately 117 million products have been affected by recall efforts under Section 15.

Other major CPSC accomplishments in 1979 included:

- 10 new Commission safety rules became effective;
- 7 safety rules were adopted to become effective in 1980;
- 11 rules were proposed for promulgation;
- Participation in development of four voluntary safety rules;
- Monitored development of 40 voluntary safety rules;
- Field personnel investigated 3200 product-related injuries;
- CPSC television films were seen by 3,751,000 viewers in 673 showings;
- Redesigned the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System to include 74 hospital emergency rooms;
- More than 500,000 consumer calls were received on CPSC Hotline;
- 5 million copies of pamphlets and brochures were distributed to consumers;
- CPSC public service announcements potentially reached the total U.S. population eight times over (based on Broadcast Advertiser Reports measurements).

Section 15 of the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA) requires firms to report products that fail to comply with safety rules or that contain defects that could create substantial hazards.

The largest single manufacture recall occurred when an

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REGIONAL HEARINGS SET ON FORMALDEHYDE IN HOME INSULATION

As part of its ongoing investigation into the safety and health effects of formaldehyde in consumer products, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is conducting regional hearings focusing on urea formaldehyde (UF) foam insulation. The first hearing was held in Portland, Ore. on December 13, 1979.

The Commission has received more than 500 consumer complaints about adverse health effects that may be caused by formaldehyde gas being released from UF foam insulation. CPSC staff is informed that UF foam insulation has been installed in more than 500,000 homes nationwide since 1976. The product is mixed by professional installers at the homesite and pumped into spaces between the walls in a shaving-cream-like form which then hardens into a "wall" of insulation.

The three regional hearings scheduled this year to help the Commission in deciding on regulatory alternatives for UF foam insulation, will be held on January 10 in Atlanta, Ga.; February 5 in Minneapolis, Minn.; and February 26 in Hartford, Conn.

'MOST PRODUCTIVE' YEAR from page 1

estimated 18.5 million electric and nonelectric coffee percolators were recalled because of instances where the coffee pot slipped out of the handle attachments.

A major recall occurred when approximately 22 million hair dryers distributed by 39 firms were involved in corrective actions because they contained asbestos paper which was exposed to the heated air stream.

An estimated 2 million toys containing a missile which could be fired and aspirated by children were recalled. More than a million infant exercisers which attach above doors also were recalled when it was discovered that the devices were not suitable for certain door mouldings.

Other corrective actions under Section 15b of CPSA involved 40,000 snowmobiles, 97,000 spear guns, 6,000 wood-burning stoves and many other products.

The Commission received 26 petitions during fiscal year 1979. Sixteen of these were addressed as were 27 which were carried over from the previous year.

Enforcement activities with existing rules also were extensive. During the fiscal year, area offices began monitoring over 300 recalls of products which violated regulations under the Consumer Product Safety Act (81% of the recalls), Federal Hazardous Substances Act (14%), Flammable Fabrics Act (2%), and Poison Prevention Packaging Act (3%).

Recalls of architectural glazing materials and refuse bins accounted for more than two-thirds of the total. Some of the other noncomplying products recalled included paint with excess lead, children's toys and other products, household chemicals, cellulose insulation and bicycles, and drugs and dietary supplements without child-resistant packaging.

In enforcement actions and judicial proceedings, the Commission brought 17 injunctions, 18 seizures, and 8 civil penalty actions. It initiated 3 administrative actions for cease and desist orders, and accepted 4 consent agreements.

'SAVE ENERGY SAFELY' from page 1

Gas, oil, and kerosene space heaters, for instance, can start a fire in the home if they are placed too close to drapes, furniture, or other flammable materials, or near where people frequently walk. Unvented space heaters are particularly hazardous because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. CPSC has decided to propose a safety standard to require the use of an oxygen-depletion shut off device on unvented gas space heaters. The sensor would detect reduced levels of oxygen in the living area and shut off the heater before hazardous levels of carbon monoxide accumulate. When using an unvented space heater keep a window or door in the room slightly open to provide fresh air.

Adequate ventilation is also important when using coal and wood burning heating stoves. Flues should be kept unobstructed. These stoves should *only* be installed by a qualified person who follows all state or local safety requirements for their installation. Stoves and exhaust flues can become extremely hot and start fires on nearby walls, floors, and furnishings. Therefore, it is important to have an adequate clearance from combustibles on all sides of

the stove, as specifically stated in instructions with stoves listed with a nationally recognized laboratory. Fireproofing materials, such as a fireproof stoveboard or a brick platform, must be placed underneath stoves and—in some cases—on nearby walls.

Consumers are also buying a variety of energy conservation devices to add to flame-fired appliances which reduce the use of fuel while maintaining an acceptable level of performance. These include vent dampers, flue gas heat extractors, and other devices. The Commission is studying such devices for possible hazards such as carbon monoxide poisoning, explosions, contact burns, fire, and electrical shock.

The Commission has set mandatory standards for cellulose home insulation designed to protect the public from fire and corrosion hazards. It is awaiting research results before it decides whether to regulate urea formaldehyde foam insulation. This type of insulation may release formaldehyde gas into living areas, causing upper and lower respiratory problems, headaches, allergic reactions, and other health problems.

The proper installation of all types of insulation can be as important to consumers' safety as the product itself. For example, insulation should be kept at least 3 inches away from the sides of recessed light fixtures in the attic. Insulation should also be kept away from exhaust flues of furnaces, water heaters, space heaters or other heat-producing devices. Placing insulation near such fixtures could entrap heat, and a fire could result.

The Commission urges great care when using gasoline. Remember there is NO safe way to store gasoline in the home or the trunk of a car. A rear end collision could ignite gasoline stored in a car trunk, and any flame, spark, or pilot light could ignite the vapors of gasoline kept in the house. If, however, gasoline must be kept handy—never keep it in glass bottles, plastic jugs or other unsuitable containers. The consumer may want to consider a container with certain safety features such as a pressure release valve or a flame arrester. Never store gasoline in a car trunk or in a house or attached garage. Rather, keep gasoline outside the house in a well-ventilated place.

For consumers who are bicycling more and driving less, the Commission emphasizes that they should follow all traffic laws and signals, just as cars must, to protect themselves from accidental injury.

CPSC, and the Department of Energy, suggest that consumers lower the thermostat setting on water heaters. A lower temperature setting not only saves energy and lowers costs, it also prevents serious tap water scald injuries. Most water heaters in use are set at 140° F. and higher, which is hot enough to cause serious scalding burns—especially to children under the age of 5 and persons over the age of 65 who cannot escape quickly enough. Some experts believe that a thermostat setting on home water heaters of between 120-125° F. or lower may be necessary to prevent most serious injuries. Consumers should set back their water heaters to the lowest temperature which will still serve household hot water needs.

CPSC has more information on most of these energy-related products for the consumer who writes or calls the Commission.

COURT TO DECIDE CASE ON SECRECY OF CPSC REPORTS

Reprinted from *The Washington Star*, December 4, 1979.

The Supreme Court yesterday agreed to spell out the government's authority to make public the reports that private industry files on consumer products.

The case involves the Consumer Product Safety Commission, set up in 1972 to gather information on safety hazards with consumer goods.

The new case is the second one the court has agreed to hear on the commission's review of accidents involving television sets. The agency began that review after a series of fires and electric shocks that happened to TV sets.

The commission has been willing to release industry reports on those accidents to two consumer groups which want to see them. That however, has been blocked by a lower federal court. The Supreme Court is expected to rule next year on which federal court is to handle the dispute over release of the industry reports.

The new case that the justices said they would review involves a separate lower court ruling which, if it stands, could give the industry even more protection against public release of its accident reports.

Under the law creating the commission, it is supposed to determine whether the reports filed with it are accurate before it can make them public.

The agency is also obliged to decide, in advance, whether public release of the reports would be fair to the industry.

The commission has argued that it must take those steps only when it decides on its own to make industry reports public and not when someone in the public comes to the commission and demands access to the reports.

The 3rd U.S. Court of Appeals ruled last April that the commission must always go through the steps spelled out



Kenneth R. Rashid (shown at right) is congratulated after being named Associate Executive Director for Communications by CPSC Executive Director Richard A. Gross (left). Rashid had been acting director of communications since early in 1978.

by the law before it discloses any industry report.

If that ruling is upheld by the Supreme Court, the commission has argued, it would "impose a substantial, if not impossible, burden on the agency to verify the accuracy of the information" supplied to it by businesses.

If the agency were to try to verify the accuracy of the TV accident reports, for example, it would have to go through nine file cabinets of documents, the agency said.

REPORT SHOWS THAT A HOUSE FIRE OCCURS EVERY MINUTE

Here's a good resolution for the new year! Why not review your safety habits and practices around the home so you don't run the risk of an accidental house fire this year?

Why not conduct a safety inspection of your home?

According to 1978 statistics compiled by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) one American home is involved in an accidental fire every minute of the day. Over a 24-hour period, approximately 14 people will die in some 1,700-plus fires in one and two-family homes across the nation.

House fires are only one part of the overall fire picture. For calendar 1978, fire departments reported there were some 3 million fires, and property damage was estimated at \$4.4 billion. There were 8,621 deaths associated with fires and 32,023 injuries. And 162 firemen were killed fighting fires while another 106,000 were injured on the job.

The greatest property loss, the most injuries and the greatest number of deaths are associated with accidental house fires. For this reason, CPSC believes that continuing reviews of your fire safety practices at home are your best defense against a fire.

For example, cigarettes account for 32 per cent of all deaths in fires of one and

two-family homes. NFPA lists cigarettes as the cause in five of 18 major sources of fires in homes. In most fires, the association says cigarettes ignite upholstered furniture in living areas and bedding in sleeping quarters.

Other major sources of home fires include electrical wiring components, matches, lighters, candles, and cooking and heating equipment.

CPSC estimates that electric and gas kitchen ranges are involved with some 20,000 consumer injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms, about two-thirds of which are for fire and burn injuries.

Flammable liquids, primarily gasoline, are responsible for about 10,000 annual burn injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms. Some are caused by improper storage of these liquids, resulting in fires when the volatile gases are ignited by a source many feet away from the stored flammable liquid. Some 500 burn injuries were reported when kerosene ignited, and another 1,300 persons, mostly children, were treated after swallowing some kerosene.

In its technical analysis of residential fires, NFPA says that consumers should make every effort to break the ignition chain leading to the fire. Because they cause the greatest percentage of home fires and deaths, cigarettes continue to be

the target of most fire prevention programs. Consumers should recognize that they are risking fire when smoking around household articles that can ignite. Aside from safer smoking habits, increased use of flame-resistant fabrics could also break the ignition chain. NFPA also points out that the ignition of wearing apparel is a major source of fires and injuries in the home.

Beyond fire prevention, prompt fire detection offers the greatest hope for saving lives. Statistics show that the majority of home fires occur between midnight and 8 a.m., with many fires burning for upwards of 20 or 30 minutes before detected. NFPA points out that no matter how skilled at fire fighting a fire department may be, firemen cannot save many victims because they died before the fire was detected.

For this reason, no home should be without one or more smoke detectors for early warning. Many fire companies offer free literature on the proper location of smoke detectors. Home insurance companies offer many similar publications on detectors and fire safety programs for the home.

For additional information about smoke detectors and installation in the home, write Smoke Detectors, Washington, D.C. 20207.

INDEPENDENT STUDY CONFIRMS ASBESTOS HAIR DRYER HAZARD

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has received an independent analysis which confirms that asbestos fibers emitted from hair dryers may pose a significant health threat to consumers.

This analysis indicates that the majority of the hair dryers tested were found to be emitting asbestos fiber levels comparable to or greater than other serious levels of asbestos in the general environment, such as those found in certain school buildings and near construction sites.

The test results and independent analysis will become part of the scientific foundation for CPSC's investigatory approach toward regulation of asbestos in other consumer products.

A test survey of 30 hair dryers manufactured with asbestos was conducted during the past summer for CPSC by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Analysis of the fiber emission levels reported in the survey was performed for CPSC by Dr. William J. Nicholson, who is recognized throughout the international health community as an expert on the health effects of exposure to asbestos. Dr. Nicholson is an associate of Dr. Irving J. Selikoff at the Environmental Sciences Laboratory, Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City.

CPSC TV SPOTS WIN EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Public service announcements produced for the Consumer Product Safety Commission have won several recent awards for excellence.

Two television spots have been awarded first prize in the "Addy" regional competition in New York. One gave tips on chain saw safety; the other was an animated spot which demonstrated general household safety tips (electrical hazards, bathtub hazards, stair hazards, etc.).

The "Addy" competition is conducted by the American Advertisers Federation, an organization of commercial advertisers. The national competition for these awards will be held in the spring of 1980.

The "Wheels" spot, which describes the hazards of children's recreational products and the "lumber-jack" spot received awards for creativity in the U.S. Television Commercial Festival in Chicago. The "Wheels" ad was a finalist for the "Clio" competition last year. The "Clio" award is the advertising field's equivalent to the Academy Awards.

FUN IN THE SNOW — FOLLOW SAFETY RULES

Three products that can make wintery weather more enjoyable for children and adults are sleds, toboggans and snow disks. However, last year an estimated 50,000 injuries associated with these three products required hospital emergency room treatment.

Case histories on file with the Consumer Product Safety Commission illustrate that the major problems with these products fall into categories: mechanical and structural problems; riding conditions or loss of control; and collision with a moving car, another slider, or a stationary object.

Mechanical and structural problems of sleds, toboggans, and snow disks include: splintering or breaking of the product while in use; flimsy materials used in construction; and poor steering. Poor riding conditions include bumps, ruts, rocks, tree stumps and branches which are especially dangerous if partially hidden by snow. Icy conditions, patches of soft snow, or bare patches may cause loss of control.

SAFETY TIPS

Here are some tips for selecting, using and maintaining a sled, toboggan or snow disk with safety:

1. Selection

- Check for sturdy construction. Avoid split or splintered wood and metal parts bent out of shape, especially when buying second-hand equipment.

- Look for secure hand-holds.
- Avoid equipment with sharp, jagged edges and protruding rivets.
- Look for an energy absorbing pad for the seat of toboggans.
- Check sleds for easy steering.
- Avoid sleds with runners that end in sharp-edged hooks. Runners that curve continuously around to the top of the sled and connect with the side rails may be safer.

2. Use

- Inspect the sledding area before using it; avoid bumps, tree stumps, boulders, ice and bare spots.
- Use extra caution when sliding at night or in twilight, since you might not see hazards. Better yet, it's best not to slide at night.
- Supervise children inexperienced in using this kind of snow equipment. Make sure their first slides are on short, gradual

slopes that are clear of debris or bumps.

- Warn children not to push, shove, or otherwise roughhouse while riding sleds, toboggans and snow disks.
- Figure out beforehand how you will stop the vehicle or get off safely in an emergency. For example, learn how to roll sideways off sleds to lessen injury in a collision.
- Don't use streets for sliding unless they are closed to traffic.
- Don't slide through traffic intersections, across streets, or out of alleys into streets, even if cars are not in sight at the time. They can appear suddenly!
- Hold or tie ropes on top of equipment to keep ropes from slipping underneath and causing an abrupt stop.
- Never "hitch" a ride behind cars while on a sled.
- Don't slide until the slope

continued on back page

FURNITURE INDUSTRY GIVEN 1 YEAR TO REDUCE HAZARD

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission moved recently to reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries in the U.S. by approving a one-year trial period for a program designed by industry to reduce the cigarette ignition of upholstered furniture.

The voluntary program, developed by the Upholstered Furniture Action Council (UFAC), came in response to a draft mandatory safety standard for upholstered furniture which the Commission considered in November, 1978. Ufac is an industry trade organization headquartered in High Point, North Carolina, and comprised of five large furniture associations which represent approximately 80 per cent of the upholstered furniture industry's annual sales volume.

In 1978 CPSC staffers recommended that the Commission issue a mandatory federal safety standard. At that time, the furniture industry had not devised a program that could produce upholstered furniture which would resist cigarette ignition. The voluntary plan, which was developed by industry in early 1979, has resulted in "significant progress" toward the

goal of manufacturing such furniture, CPSC staff reported recently.

Every year upholstered furniture fires caused by smoldering cigarettes kill at least 500 people and seriously injure an additional 1,700, according to CPSC estimates. However, CPSC does not have the authority to regulate cigarettes as an ignition source or in any other way.

In 1976, there was an attempt to amend a CPSC law so that cigarettes as an ignition source would be placed within CPSC's regulatory jurisdiction. Congress did not approve the amendment.

Since CPSC does not have authority to regulate cigarettes — the ignition source of an estimated 33,000 fires in upholstered furniture every year — CPSC has concentrated on efforts to reduce the flammability of household items commonly ignited by cigarettes. CPSC flammability standards for such household items as mattresses, rugs and carpets now are in effect.

UFAC representatives told the Commission that they will renew their efforts to encourage the tobacco industry to develop and market self-extinguishing cigarettes.

Much of the success of the Ufac voluntary program rests on the council's ability to secure pledges from manufacturers to produce upholstered furniture according to explicit Ufac safety criteria. Pledges already have been obtained from more than 200 firms, which account for approximately 70 per cent of the annual U.S. dollar volume of upholstered furniture sales.

UFAC officials project that by the end of 1982 manufacturers' pledges will represent approximately 80 per cent of the annual dollar volume, and approximately 95 per cent of the domestic dollar volume by the end of 1984.

Under the trial program, only furniture meeting the Ufac safety requirements will prominently display Ufac tags explaining the product's conformance to the voluntary program.

CPSC staff soon will develop a "Consumer's Buying Guide" on the flammability of upholstered furniture to aid consumers in making informed purchasing decisions.

IRLG PRINTS BOOKLET ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES

A new booklet, "Publications on Toxic Substances, A Descriptive Listing," has been published by the Inter-agency Regulatory Liaison Group (IRLG). The IRLG is a group of federal agencies which administer laws dealing with various areas of public health and safety.

The 96-page booklet presents some basic facts about toxic substances and provides an annotated bibliography of publications on toxic substances available from four of the five IRLG agencies. These four agencies administer a total of 17 laws that control the way toxic substances are manufactured, packaged, distributed, used, stored and disposed of today.

Most of the publications concern toxic substances and products commonly found in the home, the workplace, the environment and in agriculture. The booklet represents the first time the IRLG has developed a joint bibliography on subjects of common interest to its member agencies. IRLG was initiated in 1977 in response to the President's promise to eliminate waste and duplication in government.

Dr. Elizabeth F. Johnson, of CPSC's Consumer Awareness Division, was project officer for the publication with Deborah Gordon, also of CPSC, assisting. The project was coordinated by a four-member panel representing each of the other three agencies — the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The bibliography will include publications of IRLG's newest member, the Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS) of the Department of Agriculture.

The booklet is available through each of the agencies' headquarters or field offices.

CPSC STATES' TASK FORCE HOLDS 2-DAY MEETING

The six members of the States' Task Force to CPSC's field operations state and local cooperative program met in Washington in late November for a two-day conference to discuss ways to broaden the effectiveness of the agency's programs. It was the second meeting of the task force, which serves as an advisory body to CPSC's Directorate for Field Operations.

The States' Task Force is composed of six of the 53 State Designees. State Designees are appointed by the governors of their respective states and serve as the primary liaison between the Commission and state and local authorities for consumer product safety related activities.

The group met in round table discussions with the Chairman and Commissioners, Executive Director Richard A. Gross, Edwin L. Tinsworth, Associate Executive Director for Field Operations, and other members of the Field Operations staff.

Representatives of the Office of General Counsel also attended. Mana Jennings, of OGC, participated in a discussion on ways to strengthen CPSC's recall outreach efforts. These included increased use of state and local authorities, local press coverage and state and local recall inspections.

CPSC Executive Director Gross told the group that he expects "CPSC is going to do more enforcement over the next few years. . . ."

Members attending the meeting were: E. Edsel Moore, director, Pesticide & Consumer Product Safety, Kentucky Department for Human Resources; Mrs. Rosemary Pooler, chairwoman and executive director, New York State Consumer Protection Board; Ms. Mary Kay Ryan, administrator, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Christopher Wiant, program administrator, Illinois Department of Public Health; and Ms. R.Y. Woodhouse, director, State of Washington Department of Motor Vehicles; and James L. Thomas, assistant director, Food and Drug Division, Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

WRAP-UP OF CPSC AREA OFFICE NEWS

During the month of November, 1979 Area Office inspectors checked more than 300 refuse bins to verify that the owner firms were complying with provisions of consent agreements entered into earlier. CPSC has begun legal actions against some of the firms refusing to comply voluntarily with provisions of the agency's ban against unstable refuse bins. The U.S.

District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia assessed a \$2,000 civil penalty against one refuse bin hauling firm. The Philadelphia AO had found that the firm's bins violated CPSC's ban and the firm had not taken voluntary action to have the bins retrofitted.

The Boston AO and representatives of other IRLG agencies (EPA, FDA, OSHA and FSQS) are preparing a series of seminars on asbestos to be held in the late spring.

An investigator from the Kansas City Area Office was instrumental in helping obtain an undercover purchase of illegal M-80 firecrackers made by the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The result: more than \$15,000 worth of the illegal M-80s were confiscated.

During November and December, 1979 the AOs assisted a number of civic, school and business groups in sponsoring holiday safety programs.

FUN IN THE SNOW from page 4

is clear of nearby sliders who could block your path.

- Move off busy slopes quickly when you reach the bottom to avoid being run into.
- Walk back up the slope along a side path out of the way of those coming down.

3. Maintenance and Storage

- Don't leave vehicles out-

doors overnight since prolonged exposure to moisture and cold could reduce the safe life of your equipment.

- Dry off vehicles thoroughly before storing.
- Occasionally rub sled runners and other metal parts with candlewax to make them coast easily and keep them rust-free.
- Lubricate metal bolts, pivots and rivets with a drop or two of oil for rust-free

use and easier steering (on sleds).

- To protect against moisture, wax any wooden parts when you remove the vehicle from storage at the beginning of the season and again before you store it at the end of the winter.
- Sand smooth or repair any rough or splintered wooden parts. Don't use the equipment until it is repaired.

PRODUCT SAFETY — IT'S NO ACCIDENT

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