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GENERAL ELECTRIC

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY . . . . . 1285 BOSTON AVENUE
BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT 06602, Phone (203) 334-1012

HOUSEWARES
AND AUDIO
BUSINESS
DIVISION

April 30, 1979

Hon. Catherine C. Cook, Director
Product Defect Correction Division
U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Washington, D. C. 20207

Re: CPSC ID 79-109
Hair Dryers Containing Asbestos

Dear Ms. Cook:

The following is a response to your letter of April 20, 1979 addressed to General Electric Company, reference CPSC ID 79-109. This letter is divided into two sections, the first being in response to the six specific questions contained in Article B of your letter, pages 3 and 4, and the second section being in response to your request to furnish information under 16 CFR §1115.13(d).

I.

B1. Q. Have you identified all hair dryers containing asbestos? Please supply us with any information you have not already given as to models, date, codes, etc. of hair dryers.

A. We have previously identified all hair dryers containing asbestos to the Commission in Attachments A and B to our response dated April 6, 1979 to the Commission's Special Order of March 29, 1979. The date code for General Electric hair dryers may be found on the plug of each dryer.

Three models included within the previous report bearing date code numbers 914 and above contain mica insulation. These model numbers are Pro 5(#5110), Pro 6(#5112) and Pro 10(#5115).

B2. Q. Have you stopped distributing, manufacturing, and/or importing hair dryers containing asbestos? If the answer

EXHIBIT Q

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

B2. Q. (Cont.) is yes, please furnish the dates on which you stopped distributing, manufacturing, and/or importing. If the answer is no, please furnish a list of persons to whom these hair dryers have been distributed and identify the places where hair dryers are being manufactured or imported. This list must be updated weekly.

A. See response to Question 2A of the Special Order. Manufacturing of such products was stopped on or before April 2, 1979. Distributing of such products was stopped on or before April 6, 1979. Any articles on the water enroute containing an asbestos liner will not be distributed until such liner has been replaced with a mica liner.

B3. Q. (a) Have you notified your customers that there is a controversy concerning the safety of hair dryers containing asbestos?

A. (a) The attached statement (Exhibit I) was given to the Commission staff voluntarily in a public meeting on April 5, 1979. In addition, notification was given to the Division sales force on April 6th, which contained a listing of those models containing asbestos insulation believed to be currently active in the marketplace. On April 24 a letter, Exhibit II, was issued generally to GE customers.

Q. (b) Have you informed your customers as to which hair dryers contain asbestos?

A. (b) See answer to 3(a).

Q. (c) Have you urged your customers to stop selling hair dryers containing asbestos?

A. (c) See answer to 3(a).

Q. (d) Have you urged your customers to inform their customers of the controversy?

A. (d) See answer to 3(a).

B4. Q. Have you notified consumers who may have a hair dryer containing asbestos of the controversy or hazard? If the answer is yes, please give details of your notification. Please supply a copy of any written notification.

B4. A. GE management at a public hearing presented the statement in Attachment I and issued 100 copies to the press attending this public meeting. A listing of hand held hair dryer model numbers containing asbestos insulation was given to the Commission staff and was widely publicized by the Commission and the media. In addition, toll free telephone numbers have been made available by GE.

B5. Q. Do you have names and addresses of consumers who may have a hair dryer containing asbestos that you distributed, manufactured, or imported? If the answer is yes, please describe the form in which you have these names and addresses and your means of access to them.

A. General Electric has the names and addresses, as returned to us, of those consumers who, during the last three years, returned the registration card which accompanied the product.

B6. Q. Are you repairing or replacing or refunding the purchase price of hair dryers containing asbestos? If the answer is yes, please indicate whether and how you are communicating this information to your customers and/or to consumers. Briefly describe what you are doing.

A. We are retrofitting or offering a suitable replacement, at our option, hair dryers containing asbestos insulation for all concerned parties. Information concerning procedure can be obtained by calling a widely disseminated 800 number. Plans are presently being considered to notify owners, identified through the owner registration cards as referred to in 5 above.

II.

The following information is furnished in response to your request in paragraph B, page 3, of your letter to "furnish the information required under §15(b) of CPSA as interpreted in §1115.13(d) of Title 16 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1115, 43 Fed. Reg. 35001-2 (August 7, 1978)...."

1. Q. The name, address and title of the person submitting the "full report" to the Commission.

A. Robert W. Mazzacane
Manager
Product Safety & Standards
Housewares Engineering Department
1285 Boston Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06602

2. Q. The name and address of the manufacturer (or importer) of the product and the addresses of the manufacturing plants for that product.

   A. See Attachments A and B to the General Electric response dated April 6, 1979 to the Commission's Special Order of March 29, 1979.

3. Q. An identification and description of the product(s). Give retail prices, model numbers, serial numbers, and date codes. Describe any identifying marks and their location on the product. Provide a picture or a sample of the product.

   A. See answer to Question 2 above. Also, see answer to Question B1 of the CPSC letter dated April 20, 1979. Retail prices are not established by General Electric Company. Available pictures for products identified on Attachments A and B of the answer to the Special Order are appended as Exhibit III.

4. Q. A description of the nature of the defect or failure to comply with an applicable consumer product safety rule. If technical drawings, test results, schematics, diagrams, blueprints, or other graphic depictions are available, attach copies.

   A. See Exhibit I.

5. Q. The nature of the injury or the possible injury associated with the product defect or failure to comply with an applicable consumer product safety rule.

   A. This report is submitted in response to a Commission staff request. General Electric Company does not admit that any injury or possible injury is associated with these products. Of course, the Company will continue to follow the Commission's activities in this area, and will review any information and data that the Commission may develop about the existence or possible existence of any product defect.

6. Q. The manner in which and the date when the information about the defect or noncompliance (e.g. complaints, reported injuries, quality control testing) was obtained. If any complaints related to the safety of the product or any allegations or reports of injuries associated with the product have been received, copies of such complaints or reports (or a summary thereof) shall be attached. Give a chronological

6. Q. (Cont.) account of facts or events leading to the report under section 15(b) of the CPSA, beginning with receipt of the first information which ultimately led to the report. Also included may be an analysis of these facts or events.

A. This report is submitted in response to a Commission staff request, and the events leading to its submission are known to the Commission. Prior to the initiation of Commission inquiries, the information available to the Company did not indicate the existence of a defect which could create a substantial product hazard.

Prior to the initiation of the Commission's inquiries, General Electric Company had received no allegations of injury concerning its hand held hair dryers, although it has received three complaint letters calling its attention to the use of asbestos. Subsequent to March 29, 1979, of course, numerous inquiries have been received; and a lawsuit which does not allege personal injury has also been filed.

7. Q. The total number of products and units involved.

A. See Attachments A and B in answer to the Special Order.

8. Q. The dates when products and units were manufactured, imported, distributed, and sold at retail.

A. See Attachments A and B in answer to the Special Order.

9. Q. The number of products and units in each of the following: in the possession of the manufacturer or importer, in the possession of private labelers, in the possession of distributors, in the possession of retailers, and in the possession of consumers.

A. It is believed that four hundred ten thousand (410,000) units were in the possession of the manufacturer (importer) as of March 31, 1979. No units are in the possession of private labelers. Information is not available to General Electric Company as to the total number of units in the possession of distributors, retailers and consumers.

10. Q. An explanation of any changes (e.g., designs, adjustments, additional parts, quality control, testing) that have been or will be effected to correct the defect or failure to comply and of the steps that have been or will be taken to

10. Q. (Cont.) prevent similar occurrences in the future together with the timetable for implementing such changes and steps.

A. Although we do not believe that there is a defect in the product, the insulating shield has been changed from asbestos to mica. The drawings and the purchasing specifications have been changed. The revised design has been cleared with Underwriters Laboratory and current production utilizes mica insulation.

11. Q. Information that has been or will be given to purchasers, including consumers, about the defect or noncompliance with a description of how this information has been or will be communicated. This shall include copies or drafts of any letters, press releases, warning labels, or other written information that has been or will be given to purchasers, including consumers.

A. See answer to Question B3 and B4, page 3, of the CPSC letter dated April 20, 1979, contained hereinabove.

12. Q. The details of and schedule for any contemplated refund, replacement, or repair actions, including plans for disposing of returned products (e.g., repair, destroy, return to foreign manufacturer).

A. See answer to Question B6, page 4, of the CPSC letter dated April 20, 1979, contained hereinabove.

13. Q. A detailed explanation and description of the marketing and distribution of the product from the manufacturer (including importer) to the consumer (e.g., use of sales representatives, independent contractors, and/or jobbers; installation of the product, if any, and by whom).

A. General Electric manufactures and sources ~~hand-held~~ hair dryers. We sell to distributors who in turn sell to dealers, as well as selling directly to dealers, and the dealers sell to the consuming public. There are other specialized sales channels such as premium accounts and stamp and incentive accounts.

With regard to the information contained in the last sentence of the answer to I-B6, the entire last paragraph of the answer to II-6, the entire answers to II-9, as well as the information referenced hereinabove as being contained in Attachments A and B in the General Electric response to the CPSC Special Order dated March 29, 1979,

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excepting the first three columns of each of said attachments, labeled "Type", "Name" and "Model No.", we claim exemption from disclosure for statements and references under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 USC §552(b) and 18 USC §1905 or regulations issued thereunder. This information is confidential, commercial information that would cause substantial financial harm if released to our competitors. It has never been released in any manner to any person who was not an employee or in a confidential relationship with the Company and is not commonly known within the industry nor is it readily ascertainable by outside persons with a minimum of time and effort.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Mazzacane, Manager
Product Safety and Standards
Housewares Engineering Department
Telephone (203)382-3556

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