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NEWS from CPSC

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Office of Information and Public Affairs Washington, DC 20207

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Independent Analysis For CPSC Confirms Potential Health Threat Posed By Asbestos Hair Dryers

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 2) -- 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 investigator 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.

Dr. Nicholson indicated in his report that the analytic procedures used by NIOSH to measure the emission levels from the hair dryers were by far the best utilized in any available report to date. However, certain conditions of the sampling and analytical procedures used by NIOSH may have resulted in an underestimate of fiber release.

"It is clear that asbestos fibers are released during the operation of most hair dryers tested, in some cases in considerable quantities," Dr. Nicholson reported. "The range of dryer effluent concentrations exceeds that of the other environmental concentrations and extends much beyond those of the ambient air."

Dr. Nicholson added that "the fiber concentrations in the effluent of some dryers exceeded the highest we have measured in eight years of surveillance of environmental asbestos contamination.

"While the risk to an individual from the intermittent use of an asbestos-emitting hair dryer is less than that from many current occupational asbestos exposures, the large number of individuals that may be exposed clearly calls for the elimination of the exposure."

As the result of negotiations between the Commission's staff and 37 companies which share virtually 100 per cent of the market of hand-held hair dryers manufactured with asbestos, the firms have agreed to cease production and distribution of hair dryers containing asbestos. They also have agreed to offer consumers some form of repair, replacement or refund.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting

the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. Deaths, injuries and property damage from consumer product incidents cost the nation more than $700 billion annually. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard or can injure children. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals - contributed significantly to the 30 percent decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at . To join a CPSC email subscription list, please go to . Consumers can obtain this release and recall information at CPSC's Web site at .