FILE NAME: Asbestos in Hair Dryers (HD)

DATE: 1979 May 7

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DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: General Electric Letter to CPSC with Summary of Apr 30 Discussion & Sample Recall Letter for Customers

GENERAL ELECTRIC

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HOUSEWARES
AND AUDIO
BUSINESS
DIVISION

May 7, 1979

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

Dear Ms. Cook:

The following summarizes our discussion on April 30, 1979 concerning a proposed voluntary program on General Electric hair dryers containing asbestos insulation manufactured or purchased by the Housewares and Audio Business Division of General Electric Company. We understand the staff has presented the program to the Consumer Product Safety Commission for its approval, and that the Commission has deferred action pending receipt of the written description of our program. This letter contains such a description. We would appreciate written confirmation of the Commission's approval of the elements of the program as set forth in this letter.. Upon receipt of this confirmation, we will complete those actions necessary to put the program fully in place.

The submission of this program does not constitute an admission by General Electric Company that either reportable information or a substantial product hazard exists. General Electric Company does not believe our units present, or could present, a health hazard. We are instituting this voluntary program in response to the concern that some consumers may have over the continued use of hair dryers containing asbestos insulation. This concern is a result of the recent widespread publicity concerning the utilization of asbestos insulation in hair dryers.

The program as presented to you on April 30, 1979 is as follows:

1. A letter has been sent to General Electric distribution customers signed by Charles J. Fabso, General Manager-Housewares and Audio Sales and Distribution Department, dated April 24, 1979 urging such customers to return their stock to General Electric Company (Attachment I). The letter also urged our distribution customers to insure that their customers are aware of the current controversy over using hair dryers which contain asbestos insulation. This letter incorporates language of the Commission staff in the staff's letter to GE dated April 20, 1979.

EXHIBIT M

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

2. We have instituted and will continue a program to retrofit all units currently in General Electric's possession (including in transit units and merchandise returned from distribution customers). The retrofit involves replacing the asbestos insulating sleeve with a mica sleeve for those models indicated in Attachment II. It is anticipated that this program will take approximately 3-4 months to complete. Such retrofitted units will be appropriately labeled stating that the unit does not contain asbestos insulation. Two samples of the mica sleeve insulation have been forwarded to Mr. Dale Wilder under separate cover.

3. Commencing the week of April 16, 1979 instructions were issued to Company owned service centers and franchised independently owned service stations to institute a retrofit program on GE units returned by concerned consumers. Parts and materials to accomplish the retrofit have already been extensively distributed and in sufficient quantities to insure the program's proper implementation. At present, such retrofit can normally be accomplished while the customer waits. GE proposes that this retrofit program continue. If we are notified that certain service centers or service stations are overloaded because of an unexpected large return of products, we will use our best efforts to have such overloads transferred to a location where the retrofit can be made more quickly. There are approximately two hundred and fifty of such repair centers throughout the country.

4. An 800 number has been available to take calls from concerned consumers since April 5, 1979. On April 17 and 23, the 800 number capability was expanded to allow the handling of five and then ten phone calls at the same time. 800 number phone operators provide model identification information to consumers who call. If the designated model contains asbestos insulation, the consumer is referred to their nearest General Electric Company service center or service station.

5. Attachment III contains a list of products for which we propose to provide a suitable replacement because we cannot effect a timely retrofit. Also indicated is the suitable replacement unit we plan to offer the consumer. Pictures of the various products have previously been provided to the Commission staff. The replacement product available to the consumer will be a serviced unit with a one year warranty. Such units will have been safety and performance tested. In addition to a suitable replacement, we are offering, at the consumer's option, a depreciated value credit against the purchase price of any product available at the General Electric service location.

Depreciated value credit will be based on the age of the product turned in; such percentage being applied against the estimated original purchase price of such turned in product. Refer to Attachment IV for additional details.

6. We propose to send out, first class mail, approximately 650,000 copies of the attached letter to consumers (Attachment V). The utilized addresses are on owner registration cards received from consumers purchasing hair dryers containing asbestos liners over an approximate three year period. The envelope (Attachment VI) will have printed on the outside of it "HAIR DRYER INFORMATION". We will arrange to tell consumers through the 800 number who indicate a service center or service station of General Electric Company is not reasonably near them that such consumers can mail their product to four selected central locations where products can be retrofitted (Attachment VII) or units exchanged. It should be understood that, because of communications difficulty, the depreciated value credit option will not be available to this limited number of consumers whose units are exchanged. Those consumers mailing in units to the designated central locations will be reimbursed postage costs. Postage cost for mailing the unit back to the consumer will be borne also by General Electric Company.

7. We plan to exchange only units in good operating condition with a suitable replacement unit. Further, the cost of any additional repairs needed on units in which we replace the insulating sleeve will be borne by the consumer.

8. Instructions have been sent to service centers and service stations for the disposing of replaced asbestos insulator liners in accordance with OHSA and other Federal regulations.

9. It is understood that any release covering details of this program will be cleared with us before the Commission or the staff so releases it.

With regard to information contained in this letter prior to Commission approval, 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 is 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 and Audio Business Division
General Electric Company

RWM:mst

General Electric Hair Dryers
Models Containing Asbestos Insulation

Type	Name	Model #
Pro Pistol	Super Turbo	PRO-11/5116-005
Pro Pistol	Power Turbo	PRO-10/5115-013
Pro Pistol	Super Pro	PRO-6/5112-005
Pro Pistol	Power Pro	PRO-5/5110-013
Pro Pistol	Pro Dryer	PRO-4/5109-001
Pro Pistol	Pistol Dryer	PRO-3/5107-011
Pro Pistol	Super Pro	PRO-2/5108-005
Pro Pistol	Power Pro	PRO-1/5105-013
Power Brush	Power Brush	PB-1/5113-005
Styling Dryer	Styling Dryer	SD-4/5101-013
Styling Dryer	Styling Dryer	SD-1/2
Styling Comb	Mist Styling Comb	STC-2
Styling Comb	Styling Comb	STC-1/1A
Salon Dryer	Portable Professional	UH-20
Salon Dryer	Portable Professional	HD-55
Salon Dryer	Salon Style Speed Dryer	HD-30/UH31
Salon Dryer	Salon Style	HD-56
Salon Dryer	Salon Style	HD-54
Salon Dryer	Salon Style	HD-52
Salon Dryer	Salon Style	HD-51
Salon Dryer	Salon Style Mist	HD-63/63SS
Salon Dryer	Super-Speed Salon Style Mist	HD-63SS/5063-008
Salon Dryer	Salon Style Mist	HD-53
Bonnet Dryer	Portable Bonnet	HD-20

The above listing is on the reverse side of C. J. Fabso's letter dated April 24, 1979.

Attachment I

Suitable Replacement Program

Replaced Unit					Replacement Unit - Service Subject to Individual Model Availability				
Model Number	Est. Retail Price	Wattage	Attach.	Settings*	Model Number	Est. Retail Price	Wattage	Attach.	Settings*
Hand Held									
PRO-1/5105-013	$21.59	1,000	2	4	PRO-5/5110-013	$15.11	1,200	2	6
PRO-2/5108-005	25.19	1,200	5	6	PRO-6/5112-005	21.59	1,400	5	6
PRO-3/5107-011	11.51	700	1	2	PRO-5/5110-013	15.11	1,200	2	6
PRO-4/5109-001	15.11	1,000	2	2	PRO-5/5110-013	15.11	1,200	2	6
SD-1/2	10.79	400	1	2	SD-5/5106-005	17.99	1,000	3	2
SD-4/5101-013	12.95	600	3	3	SD-5/5106-005	17.99	1,000	3	2
STC-1/1A	11.51	230	2	1	PRO-10/5115-013	11.51	1,200	1	3
STC-2	15.11	140	3	1	PRO-10/5115-013	11.51	1,200	1	3
Non-Hand Held									
HD-63	28.79	1,000	-	4	SB-1 w/ Bonnet Attachment	30.22	1,000	4	3
HD-63SS/5063	29.51	1,200	-	4					
HD-53	32.39	900	-	4					
HD-30	23.00	1,000	-	4					
UH-31	23.00	1,200	-	4					
HD-51	16.55	900	-	4					
HD-52	27.35	900	-	4					
HD-54	16.55	1,000	-	4					
HD-55	16.55	1,000	-	4					
HD-56	16.55	1,000	-	4					
UH-20	15.80	1,000	-	4					
HD-20	11.51	400	-	4	HD-21	23.03	400	-	4

* Number of Heat/Air Flow Settings

GEGIE 00075

DEPRECIATED VALUE

Model Number	Years Usage/Allowance -a) 1 yr./ 60%	2 yrs./ 45%	3 yrs./ 35%	4 yrs./ 25%	5 yrs/ 15%	6 yrs./ 10%	7 Yrs. +/ 0%
Hand Held							
PRO-1/5105-013	12.95	9.72	7.56	5.40	3.24	2.16	-0-
PRO-2/5108-005	15.11	11.34	8.82	6.30	3.78	2.52	-0-
PRO-3/5107-011	6.91	5.18	4.03	2.88	1.73	1.15	-0-
PRO-4/5109-001	9.07	6.80	5.29	3.78	2.27	1.51	-0-
SD-1/2	6.47	4.86	3.78	2.70	1.62	1.08	-0-
SD-4/5101-013	7.77	5.83	4.53	3.24	1.94	1.30	-0-
STC-1/1A	6.91	5.18	4.03	2.88	1.73	1.15	-0-
STC-2	9.07	6.80	5.29	3.78	2.27	1.51	-0-
Non-Hand Held							
HD-63/63SS (5063-008)	17.71	13.28	10.33	7.38	4.43	2.95	-0-
HD-53	19.43	14.58	11.34	8.10	4.86	3.24	-0-
HD-30/UH-31	13.80	10.35	8.05	5.75	3.45	2.30	-0-
HD-51	9.93	7.45	5.79	4.14	2.48	1.66	-0-
HD-52	16.41	12.31	9.57	6.84	4.10	2.74	-0-
HD-54	9.93	7.45	5.79	4.14	2.48	1.66	-0-
HD-55	9.93	7.45	5.79	4.14	2.48	1.66	-0-
HD-56	9.93	7.45	5.79	4.14	2.98	1.66	-0-
UH-20	9.48	7.11	5.53	3.95	2.37	1.58	-0-
HD-20	6.91	5.18	4.03	2.88	1.73	1.15	-0-

(a - Years Usage Determined As Follows:

Date Codes	Calendar Dates	Years Usage	% Allowance
739 or higher	Oct. 1977 to present	1	60%
639 through 738	Oct. 1976 to Sept. 1977	2	45
539 through 638	Oct. 1975 to Sept. 1976	3	35
439 through 538	Oct. 1974 to Sept. 1975	4	25
339 through 438	Oct. 1973 to Sept. 1974	5	15
239 through 338	Oct. 1972 to Sept. 1973	6	10
238 or lower	Sept. 1972 or earlier	7	-0-

Dear General Electric Customer:

As a result of the Consumer Product Safety Commission's investigation into the potential health hazard due to the use of asbestos materials as insulation in hair dryers, we have been requested by the CPSC to urge you to bring your hair dryer to the nearest GE Company Small Appliance Service location for repair or replacement, at our option. Although we do not agree with the Commission's position, because of the recent publicity on hair dryers, the General Electric Company urges that you do the following:

1. MATCH THE MODEL NUMBER on your hair dryer with the number shown on the top of the mailing label on the envelope.
2. IF THE MODEL NUMBER IS THE SAME, take your hair dryer to the General Electric service location nearest to your home for replacement of the asbestos insulation with a non-asbestos material. THERE WILL BE NO CHARGE FOR THIS REPLACEMENT. In some instances, at our option, we will furnish you a suitable replacement unit.
3. USE THE ENCLOSED GENERAL ELECTRIC SERVICE LOCATION listing to find the service location closest to your home.
4. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS concerning your hair dryer, call the nearest service location or our toll free number (800-421-5822) before going to the service location.

Following the above suggestions will result in the best service for you. Please do not take your hair dryer back to the store.

ATTACHMENT V