No comment

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Power Lawn Mowers

U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, O. C. 20207

8 APR 1982

H29

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

Mr. John **Ulmer**Legal Officer
Snapper Power Equipment
McDonough, Georgia 30253

Dear Mr. Ulmer:

This letter responds to your letter of January 27, 1982, in which you request adetermination of whether Saapper models 21500C and 21500PC are consumer products and thus subject to the SafetyStandard for Walk-Behind Power Lawn Mowers, 16CFR Part 1205. The data you have submitted indicate that these mowers are not consumer products because consumers do not appear to "customarily" use them.

As you know, the term "consumer product" is defined in 15U.S.C. § 2052(a)(J), and the term does not include "any article which is not customarily produced or distributed for sale to, or use or consumption by, or enjoyment of, a consumer." The legislative history of this section indicates that products that are not used more than occasionally by consumers are not consumer products. H.R. Rep. No. 92-1153, 92d. Cong., 2d. Sess. 27 (1972).

In general, we have established no specific criteria to determine whether consumers use **a** product more than occasionally. **Instead, we** review all available information relevant to **a** particular **determination**.

In your case, you have submitted the following data which indicate that the current use and distribution patterns of these mowers aresuch that these mowers do not fall within the definition of the term "consumer product":

- 1. The weight and cost of these mowers exceed those of the usual consumer mowers.
 - 2. Snapper does not sell directly to retail dealers.
- 3. To the best of your knowledge, the distributors and dealers of these mowers have not advertised them in consumer publications.



Mr. John Ulmer - Page 2

- 4. Advertising for these mowers has been placed in special interest publications for commercial, industrial, and government users.
 - 5. These mowers are low production items.
- 6. The survey of distributors that you conduct shows that the distributors believe "that nearly 100% of Snapper commercial mowers are sold to commercial users, not to consumers."

Our technical staff has reviewed the information which you submitted, and no information that would contradict any of the factors mentioned above has been brought to our attention. Therefore, based on all of these factors, we reached our conclusion that, at the present time, the use and distribution patterns of these mowers are such that they are not consumer products.

We wish to stress, however, that this determination is based primarily on the information supplied by you, and, if data showing different use or distribution patterns become available, our determination could change. For example, some of the business purchasers mentioned in the survey may have been rental firms that could conceivably rent some of the mowers for consumer use. In addition, if consumer use patternswere to change in the future so that these mowers would be used more than occasionally by consumers, they could then be considered subject to the standard.

Sincerely,

Martin Howard Katz

General Counsel

2597710757

a recoasideratioo of which of these mowers should be subject to the standard.

cc:

Harleigh Ewell, OGS

5: pu

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT Memorandum

FILE

U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION WASHINGTON, O. C. 20207

DATE: FEB 171982

Carl Blechschmidt, OPM DATE: FEB 1
Through: Margaret A. Freeston, Acting General Counsel

Stephen Lemberg, Assistant General Counsel

: Harleigh Ewell, OGC //2

SUBJECT: Request by Snapper for a Determination That Certain Mowers

Are Not Consumer Products Subject to the Mower Standard

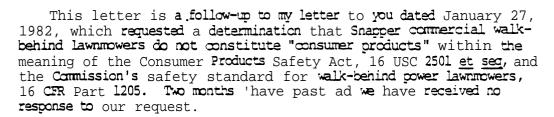
Attached is a request from Snapper Power Equipment for a determination that certain of their mowers are not consumer products. Please obtain any staff comments that may shed some light on this determination.

miety Commission Office of the

March 31, 1982

Margaret Freeston, Esq. Acting General counsel Consumer Products Safety Commission Washington, D. C. 20207

Dear Ms. Freeston:



As you how, a similar request was made for The Toro Company, by letter dated October 14, 1981, and a favorable Advisory Opinion was rendered regarding Toro products December I, 1981.

As pointed out in my letter of January 27, 1982, the Snapper commercial mowers are substantially similar to the Toro commercial mowers, and likewise do not constitute "consumer products" based upon all the criteria contained in your Advisory Coinion of December 1, 1981.

It is extremely important that we receive a response to cur 'request as soon as possible. Production plans must be made now, and resources must be irretrievably committed now.

Any further delay in responding to our request will result in a detrimentally unfair competitive disadvantage to Snapper. All we ask is that we receive prompt, fair and equal treatment consistent with your previous ruling.

> John Ulmer Legal Officer

bt

Certified Mail # P32 9974757



RESTRICTED

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

RESTRICTED

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

TO Carl W. Blechschmidt, EX-P

THRU: Walter 2. Hobby, Acting AED, Economics
William W. Zamula, ECCP

DATE: Mar.

SUBJECT: Request by Saapper for a Determination That Certain Mowers Are Sconsumer Products Subject to the Mower Standard

This is in response to your request' for comments on the Snapper Power Equipment Letter of January 27, 1982. Snapper is requesting adetermination that commercial models (21500 C and 21500 PC) are not consumer products as was done for seve-a? Toro models in OGC's Dec. L, 1981, letter to James F. Rill.

We find the submission very similar to the Toro submissions of October 14, 1981. The products involved are quite similar, asare the advertising practices of the two companies with regard to the mowers in question.

The differences between the two situations are the level of documentation, the difference in distribution practices, and the differing sales volume. In regards to ownership issues, Saapper reliason anecdotal statements by distributors while Toro used warranty cards as the basis for its assertions. Saapper evidently relies more heavily than Toro on the two-stage distribution process and tends to service commercial accounts through the retailer rather than the distributors. It also appears that commercial sales sake up a Larger proportion of Saapper's total sales than Toro's.

These differences, notwiths tauding, marketing of the Snapper nowers, appears to be directed at the same commercial users as the Toro mowers, as is indicated by the publications in which they are advertised. We therefore recommend a determination that the Saapper models 21500 C and 21500 PC not be subject to the standard.

When complying mowers become widely available (especially the blade-brake-clutch and power-restart varieties) some of the differences between so-called "consumer" and "commercial" models nay be reduced. Complying mowers nay weigh several pounds more, and the price differentials between complying mowers and commercial powers will be Less thanthey are currently. The essential question is not the weight, price, or engine horsepower of the commercial sower, but the end-users. As Long as the advertising of the commercial mower is distinct from consumer advertising and the unit volume of mowers involved is relatively small, we see no reason not to grant similar determinations for other manufacturers of commercial mowers. If, however, there appear to be significant leakages 0 f these products into consumeruse in the future, and the manufacturer is unable to document who the purchasers were, we suggest



January 27, 1982

CERTIFIED MAIL NO. 132 9974851

MS. Margaret Freeston, Esq. Acting General Counsel Consumer Product Safety Commission Washington, DC 20207

Dear Ms. Freeston:

This letter is a request on behalf of Snapper Power Equipment, Division of Fuqua Industries, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as "Snapper") for a determination, pursuant to 16 CFR Section 1000.7, of the Consumer Product Safety Act as it applies to the Commission's Safety Standard for Walk-3ehind Power Lawn Mowers, 16 CFR Part 1205. Snapper requests a determination that Snapper commercial walk-behind lawn mowers, as described herein, do not constitute "consumer products" within the meaning of the Consumer Product Safety Act, 16 USC Section 2501, et seq. and of said safety standard.

Reference is made to your letter dated December 1, 1981 addressed to Mr. James F. Rill of the law firm, Collier, Shannon, Rill & Scott, in which you rendered an Advisory Opinion that certain lawn mowers manufactured by The Toro Company (hereinafter referred to as "Toro") are not consumer products and, therefore, are not subject to the Safety Standard for Walk-3ehind Power Lawn Mowers, 16 CFR Part 1205.

Snapper manufactures two models of commercial walk-behind lawn mowers, Model 21500C (21 inch Cut, 5 HP, Push) and Model 21500PC (21 inch Cut, S HP, Self-Propelled). These Snapper commercial mowers are substantially similar to the Toro commercial lawn mowers which are the subject of your Advisory Opinion. The Snapper mowers, superior in performance and durability, are similar to the Toro mowers in design, weight and price characteristics, advertising and marketing scheme, and type of users.

Mowers · Tillers · Tractors

7

Selety Commission of the

Ms. Margaret Freeston, Esq.
Page 2
January 27, 1982

Snapper's efforts to develop and manufacture a commercial mower began in 1975. In December 1975, Hr. Don Weakley, Vice President & Sales Manager, provided information to the distributors regarding preliminary specifications of these mowers. The distributors were requested to complete a questionnaire and provide input into Snapper's commercial mower development program. Distributor interest in a commercial mower resulted in a continuation of developmental work. In August, 1976, at Snapper's national distributors meeting, Snapper's first commercial mowers were introduced. Mr. Cliff Boylston, Vice President-Engineering, addressed the distributors regarding the special features of the commercial mowers. Effective for that model year beginning September 'I, 1976, these mowers were identified as "Heavy-Duty Commercial Mowers" in the marketing program materials, and have been identified in the same manner since that time.

These mowers have been described in our advertising as "Commercial Mowers" since their introduction in 1976. Advertising has been placed in special interest publications such as Grounds Maintenance and Rent All magazines which are for commercial users.

(See enclosed advertisement, Exhibit I, and advertising literature, Exhibits 2 and 3). These commercial mowers are also advertised in the Thomas Register which is used by purchasing departments of industrial firms and governmental agencies. No commercial mower advertising mats, radio scripts, television commercials, or billboard posters have been prepared for advertising to the general public. Moreover, distributors and dealers have not advertised these commercial mowers in consumer publications, to the best of our knowledge.

Snapper's commercial. mowers are powerful, heavy-duty equipment designed for continuous operation under the demanding conditions imposed by commercial users. The relative weight and price* of Snapper commercial models and consumer models are as follows:

| <u>Model</u> | Weight <u>& Price</u> * | Comparable Consumer Models | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 21500C | 89 Lbs. \$440 | 70 Lbs. \$279 | |
| 21500PC | 104 Lbs. \$550 | 86 Lbs. \$389 | |

Snapper walk mower Models 21400 and 21400P are "in between" commercial and consumer mowers and cannot be classified as either, inasmuch as a large percentage Of commercial users purchase such models. However, because they are not predominantly used commercially, we do not seek to have these models excluded from coverage of the Safety Standard. The weight and price* of these models are as follows: Model 21400 - 71 Lbs. & \$302; Model 21400P - 87 Lbs. & \$412.

'Ms. Margaret Freeston, Esq. Page 3
January 27, 1982

Although Snapper's consumer mowers are tough, dependable and durable, they are not designed for the rigorous, heavy-duty requirements of commercial operators, as are the Snapper commercial mowers. The principal difference in the features of Snapper commercial-and consumer mowers are as follows:

- 1) Handles: Commercial mower handle structure includes stronger, 16 gauge steel tubing, steel reinforcing straps, and heavy-duty handle supports. The handles are longer to accommodate the large commercial bag, and higher overall for generally larger operators.
- 2) Grass Bag: Commercial mower bags have 50% more volume and weight capacity (3 1/4 vs. 2 1/2 Bushel Capacity).
- 3) Ground Speed: Commercial self-propelled model is 15% faster at maximum speed than the comparable consumer model, due to larger crankshaft pulley.
- 4) Drive Belt: Commercial mowers have "Kevlar" cord construction for heavy-duty application and longer life.
- 5) Throttle Control: Commercial mowers have all metal construction and larger diameter inner wire.
- 6) Wheels: Commercial mowers have steel rims and ball bearings as opposed to plastic rims and bushings.
- 7) Tires: Commercial tires, molded from premium grade rubber, are wider with thicker walls.
- 8) Gas Tank: Commercial mowers have 100% greater capacity gas tank (2 quart vs. 1 quart tank).
- 9) Air Cleaner: Commercial mowers have dual element air cleaner, the same as the Toro commercial mowers.
- 10) Engine: Commercial mowers have heavy-duty, 5 H.P. industrial/ commercial engine, the same as the Toro 5 H.P. commercial mowers. Engines on consumer mowers are generally 3.5 H.P., and do not exceed 4 H.P.

Snapper commercial mowers are low volume production items. The domestic unit sales for the two most recent model years are as follows:

| <u>Model</u> | MY 1980 | MY 1981 | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 21500C 2isoopc | 2,645 6,486 | 4,720 <u>10,612</u> | 7,365 <u>17,098</u> |
| | 9,131 | 15,332 | 24,463 |

Ms. Margaret Freeston, Esq. Page 4
January 27, 1982

Snapper sells exclusively to wholesale distributors, some of whom sell to retail customers. Otherwise, Snapper does not sell directly to retail dealers, and does not sell directly to retail customers. Therefore, the distributors are the best available source of information regarding the type of purchasers of Snapper commercial mowers. Snapper conducted a survey of distributors for several geographic sections of the country; who sell a substantial portion of the Snapper commercial mowers. The results of that survey are provided by the enclosed letters from those distributors (Exhibits 4 thru 10). The letters indicate that nearly 100% of Snapper commercial mowers are sold to commercial users, not to consumers. This finding is consistent with the design, function' and purpose of these heavy-duty commercial mowers.

As indicated, Snapper commercial mowers are relatively low volume production items, *with a small percentage sold to consumers. Snapper commercial mowers are not advertised and marketed the same as Snapper consumer mowers. Also, Snapper commercial mowers' weight and prices are more than those of the usual consumer mowers.

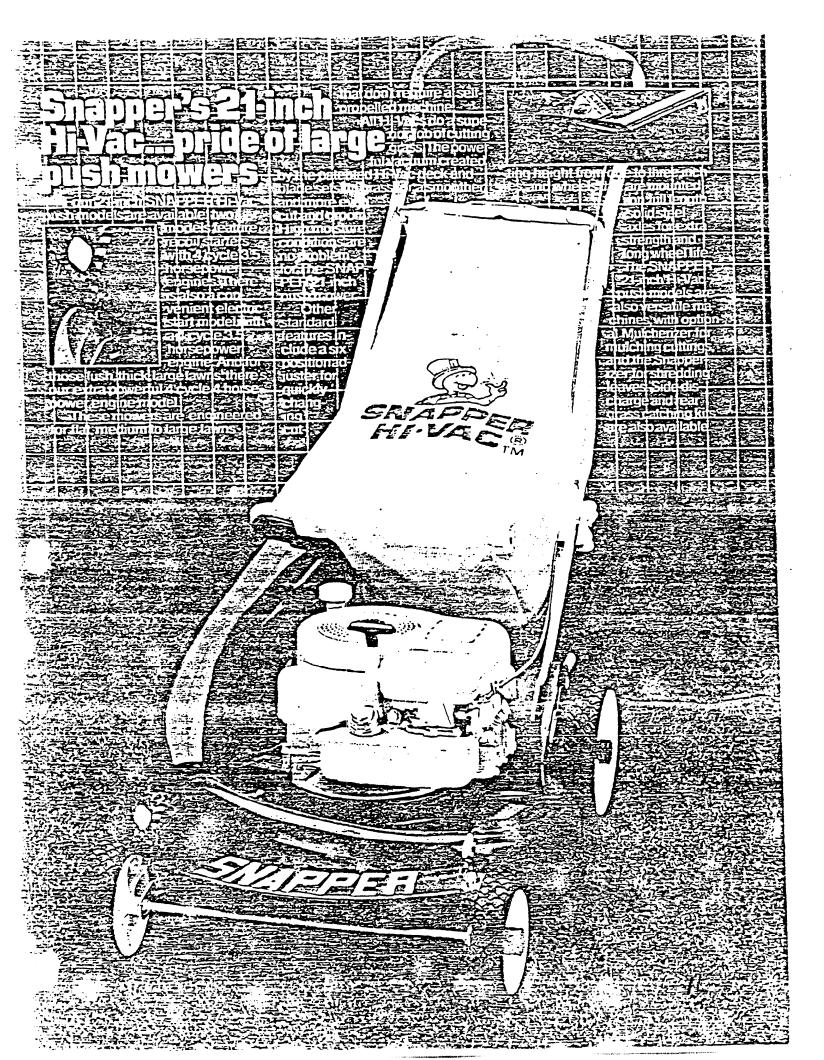
Moreover, Snapper commercial mowers are substantially similar to the Toro commercial mowers, which were addressed by your Advisory Opinion, in design, function, purpose, weight and price characteristics, advertising and marketing scheme, and type of users.

Based on all these factors, and in the interest of uniform and consistent administration of the laws and regulations, we hereby request a determination that Snapper commercial mowers are not consumer products within the meaning of the Consumer Product Safety Act, 15 USC Section 2501 et seq., and the Safety Standard for Walk-Behind Power Lawn Mowers, 16 CBR Part 1205.

Because of the confidential, restricted and **proprietory** nature of the contents of this letter, we hereby request that this letter and all correspondence pertaining hereto be exempt from public disclosure.

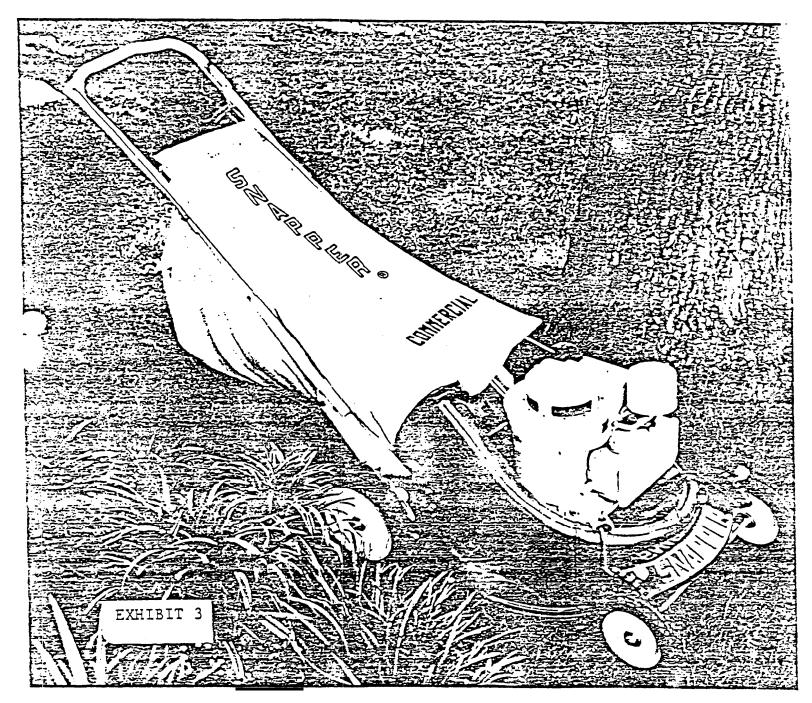
John Ulmer Legal Officer

JU/cm Enclosures









When you're looking for a mower which can handle the toughest jobs with professional ease, look to SNAPPER "Commercial" models. SNAPPER has long been known as a mower which does a superior job of cutting grass. These heavy-duty mowers are designed not only to cut grass well but to provide dependable performance under the most severe grounds maintenance conditions.



January 5, 1982

Snapper Power Equipment Mr. Tony Malizia P.O.Box 777 McDonough, Ga. 30253

Dear Tony,

In reference to your inquiry about our market for the Snapper lawn mower models 21500C and 21500PC, the mowers are definitley commercial units and are sold primarily to commercial users. I would say exclusively, except for very rare circumstances when a consumer may want one.

In our price sheet **the** unit is referred to as a commercial **lawn** mower. The very nature of it's **design** such as **large** wheels, heavy handles and **large** engine establishes the unit as a commercial lawn mower.

Respectfully

Randy Hall

AMED

Executive Vice President

RH/kp

EXHIBIT 4



BLISS POWER LAWN EQUIPMENT CO.



GENERAL OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE
101 COMMERCE CIRCLE • SACRAMENTO, CA 95815

(916) LARESTARS

BRANCHES: REDDING . SACRAMENTO

December 29, 1981

Mr. A. A. Malizia Chairman of the Board Snapper Power Equipment Co. McDonough, Georgia 30253

Dear Tony:

In answer to your inquiry with reference to the selling of the Snapper 21500C and 21500PC model mowers. I have checked with a cross section of our best dealers, and it is their opinion that the commercial series mowers are sold almost 100% to commercial users exclusively.

I have also enclosed a copy of the State of California 1981 contract for lawnmowers, on which we were fortunate enough to be awarded the order for the heavy duty commercial machines. The light duty portion was awarded to Jacobson for '81.

Sincerely,

Marshall S. Bliss

Tusken Blin

President

MSB:ab Encl.

EXHIBIT 5

BROWARD POWER EQUIPMENT, INC.



4111 S.W. 76th AVENUE DAVIE, FLORIDA 33328

January 5, 1982

Mr. A. A. Halazia Snapper Power Equipment, Inc. McDonough, Georgia 30253

Dear Mr. Malagia:

For your information, an analysis of our sales of Snapper Model 21500PC walk mower shows that approximately 97% of this mower's sales are to commercial users.

Sincerely

WILLIAM ESIER, President

BROWARD POWER EQUIPMENT, INC.

WE/sk



BOX 909 '1 1 0 0 W . DELAWARE AVENUE SIOUX FALLS. SO 57101 TELEPHONE (605) 336-0520

January 4, 1981

Mr. A. A. Malizia Chairman Snapper Power Equipment McDonough, Georgia 30253

Dear Mr. Malizia:

As your Snapper distributor in the states of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska, I want to report to you our sales experience on the models 21500C and 21500PC. We offer both of these mowers to the marketplace solely for commercial use. I have recently researched our sales records, and I find that virtually 100% of these models which we sell are sold for commercial use.

Basically, we find that these models are far too heavy and powerful to be considered by the homeowner. On the other hand, these models are excellent for the commercial lawn care people who require the additional ruggedness and additional horsepower for continuous mowing.

Very trully yours,

Wohn C. Hughes

Vice Fresident and General Manager

JCH:b1f

EXHIBIT 7



JANUARY 4,1982

MR. A. A. MALIZIA - C. E. O. SNAPPER POWER EQUIPMENT McDONOUGH, GEORGIA 30253

DEAR TONY:

THROUGH A TELEPHONE SURVEY OF OUR SNAPPER DEALERS WE HAVE FOUND THAT APPROXIMATELY 98% OF OUR SNAPPER MODELS 21500C AND 21500PC WHICH ARE SOLD TO OUR DEALERS AS COMMERCIAL UNITS ARE ALSO SOLD TO THEIR CUSTOMERS FOR COMMERCIAL USE ONLY.

SINCE SNAPPER HAS SUCH A WIDE VARIETY OF MULTI-PURPOSE WALK-BEHIND MOWERS TO CHOOSE FROM, THE CONSUMER APPARENTLY FINDS IT UNNECESSARY, AS WELL AS IMPRACTICAL, TO SPEND THE ADDITIONAL MONEY FOR THE PURCHASE OF A COMMERCIAL UNIT FOR USE AT HOME.

IF AT ALL POSSIBLE I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS PARTICULAR COMMERCIAL MODEL EXEMPTED FROM ANY CONSUMER SAFETY REGULATION COMPLIANCE.

BEST PERSONAL REGARDS,

STEVE REDAN - PARTNER

KPM D I STRIBUTORS

KPM DISTRIBUTORS - NEW YORK

SR/mgc

EXHIBIT 8

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RASOR-WEST, "ATH AND MAKE THE SHEET" WIND SHEET WIND SH

January 6, 1982

Snapper Power Equipment
A, A. "Tony" Malizia, Chairman
Mc Donough, GA 30253

Dear Tony:

In a recent survey or' the dealers who sell the most 21500C's and 21500PC's they indicated. that virtually all the above mentioned mowers were sold to commercial users.

Sincerely,

TayYor Boyd General Manager

TB/pm

EXHIBIT,9

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Lown & Garden Equipment

DOY TOO

11/21/1 / 20 14 - 15 - 17 - 24

January 4,1982

Mr. A.A. Malazia, Chairman of the Board Snapper Power Equipment, Inc. McDonough, Georgia 30253

Dear Tony;

In checking with our dealer organization through the months of November and December 1981, for the past model year we find that Ninety Eight Per Cent of our Five Horse Power Walk Behind units were sold to commercial accounts.

Our Two salesmen checked our sales records to dealers and verified the above percentage.

Many of the sales were in conjunction with tractor sales.

It seems to me there should be some difference between consumer sales and commercial sales as it applies to the new mandatory laws going in to effect this year.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Very Truly Yours,

RER/lr .

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EXHIBIT 10

EIE- CPSA Sec. 3(a) (Pour hour Monere)

2 J. DEC 1982

Hs. Susan Tucker
Dalager's Sharpening Service, Inc.
320 Second Street
Encinitas, CA 92024

Jear Ms. Tucker

Thank you for your letter of November 3, 1982, concerning certain lawn mowers determined by this office not to be consumer products subject to the Commission's Safety Standard for Walk-Behind Power Lawn Mowers. I should point out that these determinations are legal interpretations based on the information available at the time and that, if additional information showing the mower to be a consumer product became available, our previous determination should not be viewed as an authorization to produce noncomplying mowers.

In response to your specific request, we do not have the resources to automatically notify people about the status of particular mowers. However, if the Commission decided to take action against a noncomplying mower as being a consumer product subject to the Standard, and if it were determined to be appropriate to recall mowers that had already been distributed, the Commission would attempt to see that as many of the manufacturer's customersas possible were notified at that time.

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lemberg
Assistant General Counsel

Dalager's Sharpening Service, Inc. 820 SECOND STREET . ENCINITAS, CA 92024



MR . MARTIN HOWARD KATZ
GENERAL COUNSEL
U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON , O. C . 20207

RE: SNAPPER POWER EQUIPMENT

DEAR SIRS:

WE HAVE RECEIVED A COFY OF YOUR LETTER TO MR. JCHNULMER CONCERNING THE DETERMINATION OF SNAPPER MCDELS 21500C AND 21500PC NOTBEING CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND THEREFORE NOT SUBJECT TO NEW SAFETY STANDARD LAWS.

BEING IN THE LAWNMOWER BUSINESS, WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT LEGAL COVERAGE, ETC. REGARDING THESE MOWERS AND THE NEW SAFETY STANDARD LAWS. THEREFORE, IF YOUR DETERMINATION OF THESE SP'APPER MOWERS EVER CHANGES WE WOULD APPRECIATE BEING ON A LIST TO BE NOTIFIED, SO THAT WE MAY ACT ACCORDINGLY.

THANK YOU,

SUSAN TUCKER

DALAGER'S SHARPENING SERVICE, INC.