

REMARKS

BY

ANN BROWN
CHAIRMAN

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
TO

THE DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

AWARDS LUNCHEON

NEW ORLEANS, LA

OCTOBER 5, 2000

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
REGISTRATION

2000 OCT 20 A 11: 0

CPSA 6 (M) Clear
No Mtrs/Prvlbrs of
Products Identified
Excepted by
Firms Notified,
Comments Processed

MY FATHER, WHO HAD A RETAIL STORE IN WASHINGTON FOR OVER 40 YEARS, LOVED TELLING BORSCHT BELT STORIES ABOUT TALKING ANIMALS.

HERE'S ONE OF HIS FAVORITES.

A HORSE WALKS UP TO CASEY STENGEL (THAT SHOWS YOU HOW LONG AGO THIS WAS). SAYS, "HELLO."

STENGEL SAYS, "AMAZING! A TALKING HORSE."

THE HORSE SAYS, "NOT ONLY CAN I TALK. I'M THE BEST HITTER IN THE WORLD."

SO CASEY BRINGS THE HORSE INTO YANKEE STADIUM TO BATTING PRACTICE AND GETS WHITEY FORD TO PITCH.

THE HORSE KNOCKS EVERY PITCH OUT OF THE PARK.

CASEY SAYS, "FANTASTIC! YOU'RE IN THE LINEUP TODAY -- AND HITTING CLEANUP."

IN THE FIRST INNING, THE YANKEES LOAD THE BASES.

UP COMES THE HORSE. HITS THE FIRST PITCH 500 FEET INTO THE BLEACHERS.

AND JUST STANDS AT HOME PLATE. STANDS THERE!

THE RUNNERS ARE ROUNDING THE BASES.

STENGEL'S YELLING AT THE HORSE. "RUN! YOU FOOL! RUN!"

THE HORSE LOOKS AT HIM. "RUN? IF I COULD RUN -- I'D BE AT HIALEAH!"

THERE'S A MORAL TO THAT STORY.

IT'S THIS. YOU HAVE TO KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS.

I TRY TO KNOW MY LIMITATIONS.

SO YOU WON'T HEAR A LOT OF HIGH-FLOWN RHETORIC FROM ME, TODAY.

I'M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH IT.

YOU WILL HEAR THE CONCRETE DETAILS ABOUT THE WORK I'VE BEEN DOING SINCE THE PRESIDENT APPOINTED ME AND THE VICE PRESIDENT SWORE ME IN IN 1994.

AND YOU'LL HEAR A MESSAGE OF HOPE.

BECAUSE A LOT'S HAPPENED IN THE FOUR YEARS SINCE I LAST SPOKE TO YOU.

I REMEMBER THAT SPEECH VERY WELL.

YOU SENT A WHITE LIMO TO PICK ME UP AT THE AIRPORT, GAVE ME A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS, AND IN GENERAL MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS GETTING AN ACADEMY AWARD.

I WAS GRATEFUL FOR THAT.

THERE'S A MYTH THAT'S GROWN UP THAT CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY IS AN ADVERSARIAL BUSINESS, IN WHICH GOVERNMENT REGULATORS AND DEFENSE LAWYERS GLARE AT EACH OTHER FROM OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE TABLE.

THE FACT IS, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY.

WHETHER YOU'RE IN THE GOVERNMENT OVERSEEING PRODUCTS OR LEGAL COUNSEL TO THE CORPORATION MAKING THEM, OUR MUTUAL TASK IS TO HELP CONSUMERS, NOT HURT THEM.

IT'S AN URGENT TASK. FOR THE 15,000 DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCTS WE SUPERVISE CAUSE OVER 29 MILLION INJURIES A YEAR -- AND OVER 22,000 DEATHS.

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY: IT TAKES ONLY A LITTLE OVER A WEEK TO INJURE THE SAME NUMBER OF PEOPLE AS LIVE IN NEW ORLEANS.

TOMORROW ALONE, ABOUT 60 PEOPLE WILL DIE FROM UNSAFE CONSUMER PRODUCTS.

I WANTED US TO WORK TOGETHER TO TURN AN AGENCY AROUND THAT HAD GOTTEN STINGING, BI-PARTISAN -- AND ENTIRELY JUSTIFIED -- CRITICISM FOR YEARS.

COULD WE DO IT?

TODAY, THE ANSWER IS CLEAR.

WE HAVE.

I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT WHAT WE CHANGED.

AND -- I WILL BE ANNOUNCING A MAJOR NEW SAFETY INITIATIVE.

YOU'LL HEAR IT HERE FIRST.

IT'S AN INITIATIVE THAT I BELIEVE CAN HELP MAKE PRODUCTS SAFER IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

SOME SAY WE HAVE BEEN TOUGH.

I SUPPOSE IN SOME WAYS WE HAVE.

UNDER PRESIDENTS REAGAN AND BUSH, CPSC USED TO SEEK ABOUT ONE CIVIL PENALTY A YEAR.

NOW WE'VE BEEN AVERAGING TEN.

TWELVE YEARS AGO, CPSC CONDUCTED 136 RECALLS.

LAST YEAR WE CONDUCTED OVER 300 RECALLS FOR OVER SEVENTY-FIVE MILLION DANGEROUS PRODUCT UNITS.

BUT TO LOOK ONLY AT RECALLS AND PENALTIES IS MISLEADING.

MOST OF WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED HAS COME NOT THROUGH CONFRONTATION, BUT COOPERATION.

YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO PRESENT PEOPLE WITH THE FACTS, AND THEY UNDERSTAND.

I LIKE THE STORY ABOUT A MAN IN A RESTAURANT WHO CALLS THE WAITER OVER.

HE SAYS, "WAITER, TAKE A SIP OF THIS SOUP."

WAITER SAYS, "OH I DON'T NEED TO--"

"JUST ONE SIP!"

"SIR, I DON'T NEED TO TASTE YOUR--"

"DO IT!"

"SIR, REALLY, IF YOU WANT A NEW--"

"NOW!"

THE WAITER COMES OVER, LOOKS AROUND.

HE SAYS, "THERE'S NO SPOON."

MAN SAYS, "AHA!"

THAT WAITER DIDN'T NEED A THREAT.

HE DIDN'T NEED A REGULATION.

HE JUST HAD TO EXAMINE THE FACTS AND THEN

HE SAW THE LIGHT.

WE'D MUCH RATHER COMPANIES SEE THE LIGHT -- THAN FEEL THE HEAT.

THAT'S HOW WE'VE TRIED TO WORK
I'LL GIVE YOU TWO EXAMPLES.

FIRST, THE CRAYON CONTROVERSY.

IT HAPPENED EARLY THIS YEAR.

A NEWSPAPER IN SEATTLE HAD DONE A SERIES ABOUT CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND FOUND WHAT IT SAID WAS ASBESTOS IN CRAYONS.

ABC NEWS FOUND THE SAME THING -- NOT JUST IN ANY CRAYONS BUT IN BRANDS LIKE CRAYOLA.

BUT CRAYOLA'S TESTS SAID THERE WAS NONE.

EVERYONE WAS LOOKING TO US FOR AN IMPARTIAL VIEW.

SO WE CONDUCTED OUR OWN LABORATORY TESTS.

WHAT DID WE FIND?

TRACE AMOUNTS OF ASBESTOS FROM THE TALC USED TO MANUFACTURE SOME CRAYONS.

AND LARGER AMOUNTS OF ASBESTOS-LIKE "TRANSITIONAL" FIBERS, WHICH ARE SIMILAR IN APPEARANCE TO ASBESTOS FIBERS AND ARE A POTENTIAL CONCERN.

BUT WE FELT THE HEALTH RISK FOR THESE FIBERS WAS EXTREMELY LOW.

STILL -- THESE WERE CHILDREN'S CRAYONS.

I GOT TOGETHER WITH THE HEAD OF CRAYOLA. NO LAWYERS --

AND BELIEVE ME, *THAT* WASN'T EASY.

I TOLD HIM ABOUT THE TEST RESULTS.

I SAID, "FOR CRAYONS, THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
AFTER ALL, IF YOU CAN'T TRUST CRAYOLA, AN ICON OF
CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS, WHAT CAN YOU TRUST?"
TOGETHER WE DISCUSSED WHAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DO.
REFORMULATE?
ELIMINATE TALC?
GET RID OF THE TRACE AMOUNTS OF ASBESTOS AND THE LOOK-
ALIKES?

HE FOUND THAT CRAYOLA COULD DO IT.
AND THE OTHER COMPANIES FOLLOWED SUIT.
WE SENT OUT A PRESS RELEASE AND I APPEARED ON THE TODAY
SHOW TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC -- AND TO PRAISE THE COMPANIES FOR
GOING THE EXTRA MILE.

KIDS GOT TO KEEP THEIR CRAYONS.

WE HELPED TO KEEP THEM SAFE.

NO REGULATION. NO RECALL. NO HEAT.

JUST HONEST AND THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE SEEING THE LIGHT.

HERE'S A SECOND EXAMPLE.

SOFT BEDDING IN CRIBS.

BY NOW, WE KNOW A LOT MORE ABOUT SUDDEN INFANT DEATH
SYNDROME THAN WE USED TO.

OF THE MORE THAN 2700 SIDS DEATHS A YEAR, AS MANY AS 900
MAY ACTUALLY BE CAUSED BY BABIES SUFFOCATING IN SOFT BEDDING.
YOU CAN SEE HOW IT HAPPENS.

A PARENT PUTS AN INFANT TO SLEEP.

THE NOSE AND MOUTH GET COVERED BY THE QUILT OR PILLOW --
AND THE BABY SUFFOCATES AND DIES.

SO WE -- ALONG WITH THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS --
HAVE ISSUED WARNINGS TO PARENTS.

WE URGE THEM TO PUT BABIES ON THEIR BACKS -- AND DO
WITHOUT THE QUILTS, COMFORTERS AND PILLOWS.

BUT RETAIL STORES SENT A DIFFERENT MESSAGE.
THEY OUTDID THEMSELVES TO MAKE CRIBS LOOK ATTRACTIVE.

STUFFED THEM WITH FLUFFY QUILTS AND COMFORTERS.

AGAIN. WE DIDN'T NEED TO GO TO COURT. WE CALLED A MEETING
WITH THE SEVEN LARGEST RETAILERS: BABIES R US, IKEA, J.C. PENNEY,
K MART, LANDS END, SEARS, AND TARGET.

WE EXPLAINED THE PROBLEM.

AND OVER A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS GOT ALL OF THEM TO AGREE
NOT TO DISPLAY SOFT BEDDING IN CRIBS, SO SHOPPERS DIDN'T GET A
MIXED MESSAGE.

THAT'S HOW WE WORK.

IN MOST CASES, WE DEAL WITH CONSCIENTIOUS MANUFACTURERS
AND RETAILERS -- EVEN CONSCIENTIOUS ATTORNEYS -- WHO WANT TO
DO THE RIGHT THING.

NOW -- WE ALSO TRY TO WORK IN A STRICTLY NONPARTISAN WAY.
BUT THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT IN THIS WORK, WE'VE BEEN
HELPED BY A CLINTON-GORE ADMINISTRATION THAT SEES THE HUMAN
FACE OF THESE REGULATIONS -- AND BELIEVES GOVERNMENT CAN HELP.
SOMETIMES I HEAR PEOPLE -- INCLUDING A FEW OF MY FRIENDS --
SAY IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT PARTY IS IN POWER.
JOE LIEBERMAN GAVE THE BEST ANSWER TO THAT A FEW WEEKS
BACK.

HE TOLD THE STORY ABOUT THE TAXIDERMIST AND THE
VETERINARIAN IN TENNESSEE WHO OPENED AN OFFICE TOGETHER.
THEIR SLOGAN: "EITHER WAY YOU GET YOUR DOG BACK."
AS A DOG LOVER, I COULD SEE THE DIFFERENCE THERE.
THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN COMFORTABLE USING
GOVERNMENT AS A TOOL IN PROMOTING SAFETY.

WE'VE HAD SUCH ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT
AND VICE PRESIDENT, FROM HILLARY AND TIPPER.
BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT HAS BEEN THE COMMENDABLE
CONCERN FOR SAFETY IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

IT'S ENABLED US AT CPSC TO WORK AS PARTNERS WITH YOU.
STILL -- THE CPSC ANNOUNCES 200 TO 400 RECALLS EACH YEAR.
THAT'S TOO MANY.

THERE ARE TOO MANY UNSAFE PRODUCTS THAT GO OUT ON THE
MARKET AND END UP BEING RECALLED.

ALTHOUGH IT IS OUTSIDE CPSC'S JURISDICTION, THE FIRESTONE
TIRE SITUATION SOUNDS -- FROM PUBLIC REPORTS -- LIKE A WORST-CASE
EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN SAFETY TAKES A BACK SEAT TO
OTHER PRIORITIES.

COMPANIES NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF MAKING SURE THEIR
PRODUCTS ARE SAFE BEFORE THEY END UP IN CONSUMERS' HANDS.

OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS, WE HAVE WORKED COOPERATIVELY
WITH MANY COMPANIES IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS -- PERSUASION,
PUBLIC RECOGNITION, PARTNERSHIPS.

TODAY I WANT TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP.

I WANT TO LAY OUT A ROADMAP THAT I BELIEVE WILL LEAD TO
SAFER PRODUCTS AND FEWER SAFETY RECALLS.

I AM CONVINCED WE CAN HEAD OFF PROBLEMS EARLY IF
COMPANIES HAVE SPECIFIC MILE MARKERS TO GO BY THAT HELP THEM
PUT SAFETY IN EARLY INSTEAD OF RECALLING A PRODUCT LATER.

RECALLING A DANGEROUS PRODUCT SHOULD NOT BE THE FIRST
TIME THAT COMPANIES SYSTEMATICALLY REVIEW THE SAFETY OF WHAT
THEY MAKE.

THAT'S WHY I AM TODAY ANNOUNCING THE PRODUCT SAFETY CIRCLE INITIATIVE.

WE SEE THE PRODUCT SAFETY CIRCLE AS A WAY TO ADDRESS SAFETY BEFORE IT BECOMES A HEADLINE IN THE MORNING PAPER -- AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, BEFORE A PRODUCT HARMS A CONSUMER.

IT WILL PUT A SPOTLIGHT NOT ON WHAT COMPANIES DO WRONG BUT ON WHAT THEY DO RIGHT.

IT WILL SHOW AMERICANS NOT WHAT COMPANIES HAVE DONE BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO BUT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO.

AT THE HEART OF THE PRODUCT SAFETY CIRCLE IS A KIND OF CONSUMER PRODUCT TEN COMMANDMENTS.

HERE THEY ARE -- ALONG WITH SOME EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO HAVE FOLLOWED THEM.

1. BUILD SAFETY INTO PRODUCT DESIGN.

LIKE THE SMALL *MARTIN DOOR MANUFACTURING COMPANY* AND THE LARGER *WAYNE-DALTON CORPORATION*.

BOTH DEVELOPED NEW AND INNOVATIVE DESIGNS TO ELIMINATE GARAGE DOOR HAZARDS, SUCH AS FINGER AMPUTATIONS.

2. DO PRODUCT SAFETY TESTING FOR ALL FORSEEABLE HAZARDS. LIKE *MCDONALDS*.

IT'S LED THE WAY IN TECHNOLOGY THAT SCREENS TOYS USED IN ITS PROMOTIONS TO DETECT AND AVOID SAFETY HAZARDS LIKE CHOKING.

3. KEEP INFORMED ABOUT AND IMPLEMENT LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN PRODUCT SAFETY.

PROCTER & GAMBLE'S WORK TO MAKE CHILD-RESISTANT CAPS ADULT-FRIENDLY IS A GREAT EXAMPLE.

SO IS *BASS HOTELS & RESORTS*, OWNERS OF HOLIDAY INN, THE FIRST HOTEL CHAIN TO WORK WITH US TO MAKE SURE THE CRIBS IN THEIR HOTELS WERE SAFE.

4. EDUCATE CONSUMERS ABOUT PRODUCT SAFETY.

LIKE *GERBER*, WHICH PARTNERED WITH US IN A BABY SAFETY SHOWER PROGRAM.

AND *TOYS R US*. THEY ADDED AGE LABELING INFORMATION FOR PRODUCTS ADVERTISED ON THEIR WEB SITE. GREAT IDEA.

5. TRACK AND ADDRESS YOUR PRODUCTS' SAFETY PERFORMANCE.

IKEA DOES THAT... IT INVESTIGATES ANY REPORTED INCIDENTS. IT FOLLOWS UP. IT DECIDES ON WHAT'S NEEDED AS A REMEDY.

AND DON'T FORGET *BINNEY & SMITH*, THE PARENT COMPANY OF *CRAYOLA*.

6. FULLY INVESTIGATE PRODUCT SAFETY INCIDENTS.
TAKE *WHIRLPOOL*.

LET'S SAY WHIRLPOOL GETS A REPORT OF A PRODUCT SAFETY INCIDENT.

THEY FOLLOW UP, CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION AND MAKE THE SAME PEOPLE IN THEIR COMPANY RESPONSIBLE FOR BOTH PRODUCT SAFETY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE.

7. REPORT PRODUCT SAFETY DEFECTS PROMPTLY.

NORDSTROM ACTS PARTICULARLY FAST ON SAFETY ISSUES.

RECENTLY, THEY E-MAILED US A REPORT, ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE, PLACED ADS AND OFFERED REFUNDS -- ALL IN A COUPLE OF DAYS.

DEERE & COMPANY REGULARLY REPORTS QUICKLY AND TAKES ADVANTAGE OF OUR FAST-TRACK PROGRAM TO BEGIN A RECALL IN AS LITTLE AS 12 DAYS.

8. IF A DEFECT OCCURS, PROMPTLY OFFER A COMPREHENSIVE RECALL PLAN.

WHEN THE *TORO COMPANY* LEARNS OF A POTENTIAL PROBLEM, IT PRODUCES A FULL PLAN FASTER THAN THE AL GORE RESPONSE TEAM.

AND *HASBRO'S* SAFETY RECALL PROGRAM IS A MODEL EVERY COMPANY SHOULD STUDY.

9. WORK WITH CPSC TO MAKE SURE YOUR RECALL PLAN WORKS AGAIN. *WHIRLPOOL*.

IT WASN'T SATISFIED WITH ONE OF ITS DISHWASHER RECALLS. SO IT ISSUED A SECOND NOTICE TO INCREASE CONSUMER RESPONSE.

IT COST THEM MONEY -- BUT IT SAVED LIVES.

10. LEARN FROM MISTAKES -- YOURS AND OTHERS.
NOBODY'S PERFECT.

BUT CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY IS NOT AN ARCANE SCIENCE. THE PRINCIPLES PRODUCING A SAFER MARKETPLACE ARE CLEAR. AND ONE OF THEM IS CERTAINLY: LEARN THE RIGHT THING BY LOOKING AT WHAT WENT WRONG.

TEN PRINCIPLES. THIRTY-TWO COMPANIES THAT HAVE ALREADY JOINED THE PRODUCT SAFETY CIRCLE.

THEY'VE ALL PLEDGED TO IMPLEMENT THESE 10 PRACTICES, PUT A SENIOR PRODUCT SAFETY OFFICIAL IN CHARGE, AND AGREE TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT THEIR SAFETY INNOVATIONS.

WE INVITE OTHERS TO TAKE THE PLEDGE.
YOU CAN BE SURE WE'LL LET THE WORLD HEAR ABOUT IT.
PARTNERSHIP.
COOPERATION.
WORKING WITH INDUSTRY NOT AGAINST IT.
THAT'S WHAT WE'VE TRIED TO DO.
WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED A LOT.
BUT BELIEVE ME -- THERE'S A LOT LEFT TO ACCOMPLISH.
AND WE HAVE THE MOST URGENT REASON IMAGINABLE. OUR
FAMILIES.

I COULD QUOTE YOU ALL THE STATISTICS YOU WANT ABOUT LIVES
THREATENED AND DOLLARS SAVED IN THE AREA OF CONSUMER SAFETY.
BUT STATISTICS DON'T BLEED.
NUMBERS DON'T TELL YOU WHAT IT'S LIKE TO SEE A LOVED ONE
THREATENED.

THEY DON'T TELL YOU WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LOSE A CHILD -- OR TO
SUFFER THE KIND OF INJURY THAT LASTS A LIFETIME.

I HAVE ENLISTED A SMALL ARMY OF PARENTS AROUND THE
COUNTRY WHOSE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN KILLED OR INJURED BY A
CONSUMER PRODUCT TO HELP US, SO THAT NO OTHER CHILD WILL DIE
THE WAY THEIR CHILD DIED.

I THINK WE MUST NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE PERSONAL PAIN
CAUSED BY THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHOSE LITTLE SON OR DAUGHTER WE'VE
SAVED.

YOU NEVER DO WHEN IT COMES TO SAFETY.

BUT THEY ARE OUT THERE -- AND THEY ARE OUT THERE IN
INCREASING NUMBERS BECAUSE OF THE COURAGE OF THOSE BRAVE
PARENTS.

AND THEY ARE OUT THERE BECAUSE OF THE CONSCIENTIOUS,
RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM.

TO THOSE WHO SAY WE CANNOT WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE
FAMILIES AND CHILDREN SAFER, I SAY: WE'VE DONE IT.

TO THOSE WHO SAY SAFETY DEMANDS UNRELENTING
GOVERNMENT SUPERVISION, I SAY: WE'VE DONE WITHOUT IT.

TO THOSE WHO MIGHT FEEL TEMPTED TO REST ON THEIR LAURELS,
I REMIND THEM OF THOSE WHO WILL BE KILLED AND INJURED IN THE
NEXT FEW HOURS.

WINSTON CHURCHILL HAD A REPUTATION NOT ONLY AS A STATESMAN BUT AS ONE WHO LIKED TO DRINK -- AND I DON'T MEAN BOTTLED WATER.

ONCE, IN HIS LATER YEARS, CHURCHILL WAS INTRODUCED AT A DINNER BY A MODERATOR WHO MADE FUN OF HIS REPUTATION.

THE MODERATOR SAID, "IF ALL THE LIQUOR OUR SPEAKER HAD EVER DRUNK WAS Poured INTO THE DINING HALL, IT WOULD PROBABLY COME HALFWAY UP TO THE CEILING."

WHEN CHURCHILL GOT UP, HE LOOKED AT THE WALL, THEN UP TO THE HIGH CEILING.

HE SAID, "SO LITTLE TIME ... SO MUCH TO DO."

WE HAVE SO LITTLE TIME.

WE HAVE SO MUCH TO DO.

I'M GRATEFUL THAT WE CAN DO IT TOGETHER.

###