MEETING LOG

FIRE SAFETY DEVICES PROJECT

DIRECTORATE FOR ENGINEERING SCIENCES

SUBJECT: Meeting with Underwriters Laboratories to Discuss Results of Fire Safety Devices Project.

DATE OF MEETING: January 13, 1998

PLACE OF MEETING: CPSC Headquarters, Bethesda, MD

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Rohit Khanna, Directorate for Engineering Sciences

COMMISSION ATTENDEES:

Rohit Khanna, Directorate for Engineering Sciences, Mechanical Engineering Division
Carolyn Meiers, Directorate for Engineering Sciences, Human Factors Division
Andrew G. Standnik, Associate Executive Director for Engineering Sciences
Ronald Monticone, Directorate for Epidemiology and Health Sciences, Division of Hazard Analysis

NON-COMMISSION ATTENDEES:

William E. Carey, Underwriters Laboratories
John Drengenberg, Underwriters Laboratories
A. Cohen, Consumer
Christine Eames, Product Safety Letter

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the results of the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) FY97 Project on Fire Safety Devices. CPSC staff presented Underwriters Laboratories (UL) the results of two products evaluated in the project, residential fire blankets and residential fire extinguishers.

Discussion of Residential Fire Blankets

Residential fire blankets are fairly new to the U.S. consumer market. They are primarily intended to smother cooking fires, and have a potential to reduce the number of cooktop fires that occur in the U.S. Currently available consumer fire blanket models were tested by CPSC staff using the British Standards Institute (BSI) 6575-1985, *Fire Blankets*. Some fire blanket models showed potential for extinguishing relatively large cooking oil fires,

but in general did not perform consistently. CPSC staff believes that fire blankets can provide consumers with a viable option for dealing with cooktop fires provided a voluntary standard is developed which adequately addresses issues associated with the product. UL indicated that the use of fire blanket involves consumers becoming intimate with fires and voiced concern on this issue, but they did agree to participate in the development of a voluntary standard for fire blankets.

Discussion of Residential Fire Extinguishers

The results of residential fire extinguisher testing were discussed with UL. In 1996, approximately 6 million home fire extinguishers were sold in the U.S. The voluntary standard that specifies performance tests for residential fire extinguishers is UL 711 *Ratings and Fire Testing of Fire Extinguishers*. The CPSC project involved testing residential fire extinguishers that were listed to the UL 711 standard and fire extinguishers that did not claim to meet UL 711. CPSC staff found that fire extinguishers that were not listed to the UL 711 standard were ineffective in extinguishing the size of fires that were required for a listing for residential applications. CPSC staff asked UL if they were interested in developing an alternate set of fire performance test for smaller fire extinguishers. UL's response was that any fire extinguisher that cannot meet the minimum fire performance tests of UL 711 would not provide consumers adequate safety for extinguishing fires. CPSC staff will work with UL to develop a strategy for dealing with ineffective fire extinguishers in the residential market.

CPSC staff also discussed some possible revisions to the UL 711 standard. During testing of residential fire extinguishers, CPSC staff were unable to completely extinguish fires with UL listed fire extinguishers, mainly due to lack of extinguishing agent. During evaluation of fire extinguishers for listing, UL conducts tests using professionally trained fire extinguisher operators. CPSC staff believes that the ability of the intended user should be taken into account when evaluating fire extinguishers. In particular, for residential fire extinguishers, where the end users are people with little or no experience with extinguishing fires.