

CPSC 6 (b)(1) Cleared
11/4/98
Products Identified
Excepted by
Firms Notified,
Comments Processed.

Chairman Ann Brown
American Pyrotechnics Association
50th Anniversary Conference
Orlando, Florida
September 23, 1998

CPSC/OFFICE OF
THE SECRETARY

1998 NOV -6 P 2:44

I ONCE READ A STORY ABOUT THE TIME GEORGE BERNARD SHAW SENT WINSTON CHURCHILL TWO TICKETS AND A NOTE THAT READ:

"ENCLOSED ARE TWO TICKETS TO THE FIRST- NIGHT PERFORMANCE OF MY NEW PLAY.

BRING A FRIEND -- IF YOU HAVE ONE."

CHURCHILL SENT A NOTE BACK:

"DEAR GBS: UNFORTUNATELY I AM ENGAGED ON THAT NIGHT.

COULD I HAVE TICKETS FOR THE SECOND NIGHT -- IF THERE IS ONE?"

I AM DELIGHTED YOU INVITED ME TO GIVE MY FIRST PERFORMANCE ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

AND I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE A KEY MEMBER OF OUR CPSC COMPLIANCE TEAM WHO IS HERE TODAY -- PAT RACE.

IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS, DIRECT THEM TOWARDS HIM.

PAT MAY LOOK YOUNG -- BUT HE KNOWS HIS BUSINESS.

AND, AS OF LAST WEEK, HE IS OVER 30!

I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU TODAY ABOUT SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES.

THEY ARE ISSUES THAT GO TO THE HEART OF WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY WE WANT TO CREATE ALL OVER THIS COUNTRY.

I SAW AN EXAMPLE OF THAT RECENTLY FROM A 12-YEAR-OLD-BOY FROM CHICAGO, NAMED COLIN BURNS.

HE AND HIS FRIENDS WERE SO EXCITED WHEN THE CHICAGO BULLS WON THE CHAMPIONSHIP LAST YEAR, THEY TRIED TO SET OFF SOME FIREWORKS.

AN ADULT LIT A PROFESSIONAL SHELL -- THE KIND THAT'S SUPPOSED TO SHOOT INTO THE AIR, THEN IGNITE.

THIS ONE DIDN'T GO OFF, SO THEY TRIED TO RELIGHT IT.

IT EXPLODED, AND COLIN LOST HIS LEFT EYE.

THERE'S SOMETHING SO TRAGIC ABOUT FIREWORKS INJURIES.

WE USE FIREWORKS AT OUR MOST TRIUMPHANT CELEBRATIONS -- LIKE THE FOURTH OF JULY.

WHEN MY OWN CHILDREN WERE GROWING UP, I USED TO LOVE TAKING THEM TO THE 4TH OF JULY FIREWORKS DOWN BY

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT.

I SURELY DIDN'T WANT THEM TO BE INJURED AND I DON'T WANT ANY OTHER CHILDREN TO BE INJURED BY FIREWORKS EITHER.

BUT UNFORTUNATELY EACH YEAR CHILDREN LOSE HANDS AND FINGERS -- AND EYES.

AND SO, AT THE CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, ONE OF THE THINGS WE DO IS ISSUE WARNINGS.

THAT'S WHERE I MET COLIN -- HE AND HIS FAMILY CAME TO OUR PRESS CONFERENCE.

HE WAS SUCH A GREAT KID -- BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU: HE STARTLED ME.

WE WERE TALKING BEFORE THE PRESS CONFERENCE AND AT ONE POINT HE SAID, "I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING."

AND HE TOOK OUT HIS GLASS EYE.

MY LEGS ACTUALLY GOT RUBBERY.

BUT I STRUGGLED TO SEEM LIKE THE POISED ADULT I'M SUPPOSED TO BE, AND I SAID, "I'LL BET YOU DO THAT TO YOUR FRIENDS."

HE SAID, "YEP. IN CATECHISM CLASS I PUT MY EYE ON THEIR SHOULDER AND SAY, 'I'VE GOT MY EYE ON YOU.'"

I'M GLAD THIS EXCEPTIONAL YOUNG MAN HAS THE RESILIENCE TO JOKE ABOUT THIS INCIDENT THAT HAS CHANGED HIS LIFE.

BUT HIS INJURY WAS NO JOKE.

AND OTHER INJURIES FROM FIREWORKS EACH YEAR ARE NO JOKE.

I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU TODAY THE MOST UP-TO-THE-MINUTE DATA ON FIREWORKS INJURIES. I AM GIVING THIS INFORMATION TO YOU FIRST, BECAUSE I KNOW THAT IT IS AS IMPORTANT TO YOUR INDUSTRY AS IT IS TO US.

I MUST CAUTION THAT THESE ARE NOT FINAL FIGURES -- WE ARE STILL GETTING INFORMATION FROM HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOMS AND OUR PROJECTIONS FOR THE YEAR COULD STILL CHANGE.

BUT AS OF TODAY, OUR REPORTS SHOW THAT THIS YEAR THERE WERE 5,500 EMERGENCY-ROOM TREATED INJURIES IN THE 30 DAYS AROUND THE 4TH OF JULY.

BASED ON THAT, WE PROJECT A TOTAL OF ABOUT 7,800 FIREWORKS-RELATED INJURIES FOR 1998.

OUR STATISTICIANS TELL ME THAT IS NOT A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FROM THE LAST TWO YEAR'S FIGURES.

BUT -- AND THIS IS SIGNIFICANT -- INJURIES OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS ARE LOWER THAN THEY WERE IN PREVIOUS YEARS.

SINCE I BECAME CPSC CHAIRMAN IN 1994, WE HAVE SEEN A DECREASE OF ABOUT ONE-THIRD IN FIREWORKS INJURIES.

THIS HAS COME ABOUT AS THE RESULT OF YOUR EFFORTS AND OURS -- GOOD ENFORCEMENT BY CPSC, AND YOUR INDUSTRY'S INCREASING COMMITMENT TO QUALITY AND SAFETY.

THAT IS THE GOOD NEWS.

THE BAD NEWS IS THERE ARE STILL THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LIKE COLIN OUT THERE WHO HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE RESULTS OF INJURIES FROM FIREWORKS.

AND ABOUT HALF OF THEM ARE CHILDREN UNDER AGE 15.

EVEN MORE TRAGICALLY, EACH YEAR WE GET REPORTS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS WHO DIE FROM FIREWORKS.

COLIN WAS WITH US IN JULY TO HELP US WARN OTHERS -- TO PREVENT THEM FROM EXPERIENCING WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM.

OF COURSE WE DO MORE THAN WARN AND ALERT PEOPLE TO DANGER.

WE ISSUE MANDATORY SAFETY STANDARDS FOR CONSUMER PRODUCTS, INCLUDING FIREWORKS.

WE TAKE CONCRETE ENFORCEMENT ACTION, TOO.

TODAY, I WANT TO TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT CPSC'S WORK.

I'LL TELL YOU SOME OF THE THINGS WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED.

I'LL TELL YOU SOME OF THE THINGS YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH WITH US.

BUT I WANT TO BEGIN BY SETTING THINGS IN A LARGER CONTEXT.

FOUR YEARS AGO, WHEN VICE PRESIDENT GORE SWORE ME IN AS CHAIRMAN OF THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, THERE WAS A LOT OF CONCERN ABOUT MY APPOINTMENT.

HERE I WAS, A 57 YEAR-OLD GRANDMOTHER WHO HAD NEVER

RUN A MAJOR ORGANIZATION.

I WAS KNOWN AS A ZEALOT ABOUT SAFETY -- AND I WAS SO NAIVE I THOUGHT THAT WAS A COMPLIMENT.

IN WASHINGTON, I WAS KNOWN AS THE WOMAN WHO WAS ON TV SHOWS, BRANDISHING UNSAFE TOYS AND THROWING THEM INTO A TRASH CAN.

PEOPLE HAD A HARD TIME BELIEVING I COULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

IN FACT, SOMEONE CAME UP TO ME ONE NIGHT AND SAID, "YOU MUST HAVE A DOUBLE."

"I SAW A CRAZY WOMAN ON TV LAST NIGHT, THROWING TOYS INTO THE TRASH -- AND SHE LOOKED JUST LIKE YOU!"

IT WAS ME, ALL RIGHT.

BUT COULD I RUN AN AGENCY?

WELL, I HAD CONCERNS, TOO.

MY CONCERN WAS: COULD YOU REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN GOVERNMENT?

OR DID OFFICIALS JUST GET SWALLOWED UP BY THE BUREAUCRACY, AND WIND UP PROCEEDING IN THE SAME OLD SNAIL'S PACE, NO MATTER WHAT OUR HOPES AS WE TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE?

COULD YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERED?

I ONCE HEARD A STORY ABOUT A VETERINARIAN AND A TAXIDERMIST, WHO OPENED AN OFFICE TOGETHER.

THEIR SLOGAN: "EITHER WAY, YOU GET YOUR DOG BACK."

AS A DOG LOVER, I COULD SEE THE DIFFERENCE THERE.

BUT WHAT ABOUT WHEN IT CAME TO AN AGENCY WHICH COULD DO SO MUCH BY WORKING WITH INDUSTRY FOR CONSUMER SAFETY?

WE HAVE A WONDERFUL, INNOVATIVE, FREE-MARKET ECONOMY.

BUT LET'S FACE IT.

SOME PRODUCTS INJURE PEOPLE.

AND NOT JUST FIREWORKS.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS CAN SET HOUSES ON FIRE.

SOFT QUILTS CAN SUFFOCATE BABIES.

SOCCER GOALS CAN CAUSE INJURY -- AND EVEN DEATH.

EVEN BUNK BEDS MAY HAVE HIDDEN HAZARDS THAT CAN KILL A CHILD.

WE HAVE JURISDICTION OVER ABOUT 15,000 TYPES OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS AT CPSC.

MOST OF THEM ARE FINE.

BUT SOME CAUSE UP TO 28 MILLION INJURIES A YEAR --

AND ALMOST 22,000 DEATHS.

HOW DO WE PREVENT THIS?

COULD GOVERNMENT HELP?

I THOUGHT IT COULD -- AND SHOULD.

I WANTED AN ACTIVE CPSC.

BUT NOT ONE THAT TRIED TO REGULATE EVERYTHING.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO ONLY WANT INDUSTRY TO FEEL THE HEAT.

I'D RATHER ENCOURAGE THEM TO SEE THE LIGHT.

I ALSO WANTED A COMMISSION THAT COULD CUT THROUGH THE BUREAUCRACY AND ACT ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE.

AND NOW, AFTER FOUR YEARS, I CAN LOOK BACK AND SAY: THAT'S WHAT WE'VE DONE.

WE'VE DONE IT IN A VARIETY OF WAYS.

WE IDENTIFY HAZARDS.

WE ISSUE WARNINGS.

WE COLLECT DATA -- FOR EXAMPLE, THE FIREWORKS INJURY DATA I SHARED WITH YOU.

WE WORK WITH INDUSTRY TO GET THEM TO ADOPT VOLUNTARY STANDARDS.

WE ISSUE MANDATORY STANDARDS.

WE ORDER RECALLS.

HOW DO WE MEASURE HOW DIFFERENT WE'VE BEEN THAN OUR
PREDECESSORS?

JUST LOOK AT HOW WE DO RECALLS.

OUR PREDECESSORS USED TO DO WHAT I CALL
THE PAPER AIRPLANE APPROACH -- SAIL A LITTLE PRESS
RELEASE OUT THE WINDOW HOPING SOMEONE PICKS IT UP DOWN
BELOW.

WE DO OUR BEST TO GET ATTENTION -- ON TV, RADIO,
FEATURES IN NEWSPAPERS -- AND SPEECHES LIKE THIS ONE.

YOU KNOW, I THINK OF THIS STORY MY FATHER USED TO
TELL, OF THE P.R. MAN WHO CAME TO MOSES AT THE RED SEA
AND ASKED WHAT HIS PLANS WERE.

MOSES SAID, "WELL, I THINK I'LL PART THE RED SEA,
LET OUR PEOPLE CROSS.

"THEN I'LL LET PHARAOH'S ARMY GET HALFWAY ACROSS,
BRING THE WATER BACK AND DROWN THEM.

"THINK IT'LL WORK?"

THE PR MAN SAID, "I DON'T KNOW, BUT IF IT DOES, I
GUARANTEE YOU TWO PAGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT."

WE HAVEN'T MADE IT INTO THE BIBLE, BUT WE HAVE

GOTTEN A LOT OF GOOD PRESS.

WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED A LOT.

BUT BELIEVE ME -- THERE'S A LOT LEFT TO ACCOMPLISH.

AND I'M NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT THINGS THE
COMMISSION CAN DO BY ITSELF.

FOR THE BEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS, THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS
MOST IN KEEPING WITH OUR TRADITION, ARE THOSE WE DO
TOGETHER WITH CONSUMERS -- AND WITH INDUSTRY.

I BELIEVE IN THE FREE MARKET.

I ALSO BELIEVE WE HAVE TO BALANCE THE NEED TO LET
THE MARKET WORK WITH A WILLINGNESS TO ACT WHEN IT LETS
FAMILIES DOWN.

CPSC THESE DAYS IS NOT AFRAID TO ACT IN NEW WAYS.

THAT IS WHY I WANT TO WORK WITH YOUR INDUSTRY TO
CUT FIREWORKS INJURIES DOWN EVEN FURTHER.

I SAID EARLIER THAT THE INJURY DECREASES OF THE
LAST THREE YEARS RESULTED FROM OUR JOINT EFFORTS.

WE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED THAT YOUR INDUSTRY IS
PUTTING MORE EMPHASIS ON SAFETY.

YOU HAVE RESPONDED TO SAFETY CONCERNS THAT CPSC HAS
RAISED WITH YOU -- FOR INSTANCE, REMOVING ARSENIC FROM

SNAKES WHEN WE CALLED THAT TO YOUR ATTENTION.

AND YOU ARE DOING MORE TESTING OF YOUR PRODUCTS.
THAT IS IMPORTANT.

BUT THERE IS STILL LOTS OF ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.

FIRST, MANY TESTING PROGRAMS IN THIS INDUSTRY HAVE
NOT SHOWN THE RESULTS THEY SHOULD.

I CHALLENGE YOU TO IMPROVE THE TESTING PROGRAMS
THROUGHOUT YOUR INDUSTRY AND MAKE SURE THAT EVERY FIRM
HAS ONE.

SECOND, TOO MANY IMPORTED FIREWORKS FAIL TO MEET
CPSC SAFETY STANDARDS.

AS YOU KNOW, EVERY YEAR WE WORK WITH CUSTOMS TO
ENSURE THAT FIREWORKS IMPORTED INTO THE U.S. COMPLY WITH
OUR REGULATIONS.

AND EVERY YEAR WE FIND MILLIONS OF UNITS THAT ARE
NOT SAFE.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEIZE UNSAFE FIREWORKS.

BUT WE WOULD RATHER HAVE ALL IMPORTED FIREWORKS BE
SAFE.

THIRD, SALES OF ILLEGAL FIREWORKS AND PROFESSIONAL

FIREWORKS TO CONSUMERS ARE STILL COMMON.

JUST THIS YEAR, WE FOUND EXAMPLES OF THIS IN WISCONSIN -- WITH THE RESULT THAT THERE WERE AT LEAST TWO SEVERE HAND INJURIES, AND, TRAGICALLY, THE DEATH OF A 17-YEAR OLD BOY.

IT WOULD GREATLY BENEFIT THE REPUTATION OF THE PYROTECHNIC INDUSTRY IF YOU WORKED TO ELIMINATE ILLEGAL SALES TO CONSUMERS.

WE INVITE YOU TO WORK WITH CPSC AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO ELIMINATE THIS ILLEGAL PRACTICE.

FINALLY, THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY INJURIES.

I HAVE HEARD THE COMPLAINT THAT MANY OF THESE INJURIES RESULT FROM CONSUMER MISUSE.

THAT IS NOT AN EXCUSE FOR AN INDUSTRY TO FAIL TO PRODUCE A SAFER PRODUCT.

IT IS UP TO YOU TO ENSURE THAT THE FIREWORKS YOU MAKE ARE AS SAFE AS THEY CAN BE.

YOU ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO BE OUR PARTNER IN REDUCING INJURIES.

WE ARE EAGER TO WORK WITH YOU.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT, TOGETHER, WE CAN BRING THOSE INJURY AND DEATH STATISTICS DOWN EVEN MORE.

LET'S MAKE THAT OUR GOAL FOR THE YEAR 2000.

I'VE LEARNED A LOT IN THIS JOB.

SOMETIMES IN THE STRANGEST WAYS.

A WHILE BACK WE HAD A TAKE YOUR DAUGHTER TO WORK DAY AT THE AGENCY AND I TOOK MY GRANDDAUGHTER LIL.

I WAS TALKING TO THE KIDS AND ASKED THEM, "WHO WEARS BIKE HELMETS?"

WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT?

EVERY HAND WENT UP BUT LIL'S.

I SAID, "WHY DON'T YOU?"

"GRANDMA ANN, I LOOK LIKE A DORK."

YOU KNOW WHAT? THOSE HELMETS DID MAKE YOU LOOK LIKE A DORK.

THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION -- TRIPLE A -- DID A SURVEY AND FOUND ALL KIDS FELT THE SAME WAY.

SO WE TALKED TO THE HELMET MANUFACTURERS. AND NOW THEY PRODUCE HELMETS EVEN MY GRANDDAUGHTER CONFESSES ARE AWESOME.

AND THEY ARE SAFER TOO. BECAUSE WE HAVE ALSO PASSED A NEW FEDERAL SAFETY STANDARD FOR BIKE HELMETS.

BECAUSE LIL WILL BE WEARING A HELMET, I'LL BE A HAPPIER GRANDMA.

AND IN A WAY, THINKING ABOUT LIL DRIVES HOME TO ME WHY WHAT WE DO IS SO IMPORTANT.

ALL OF US IN THIS ROOM -- NO MATTER WHAT WE DO OR WHO WE WORK FOR -- ARE CONSUMERS.

THE WORK WE DO INVOLVES NOTHING LESS THAN PROTECTING THE LIVES OF THOSE MOST PRECIOUS TO US -- OUR FAMILIES.

I COULD QUOTE YOU ALL THE STATISTICS YOU WANT ABOUT LIVES THREATENED AND DOLLARS SAVED IN THE AREA OF CONSUMER SAFETY.

BUT AS THE NOVELIST ARTHUR KOESTLER ONCE WROTE: "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.

BUT I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT HAS IMPRESSED ME MORE AND MORE OVER THE YEARS I'VE HELD THIS POSITION: HOW MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUFFERED THE MOST TERRIBLE PERSONAL TRAGEDIES, FIND MEANING IN HELPING OTHERS.

I THINK OF A WOMAN NAMED THELMA SIBLEY WHO SUFFERED THE WORST NIGHTMARE OF ANY PARENT.

HER FIVE YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, NANCY, STRANGLER, WHEN THE DRAWSTRING OF HER JACKET WAS CAUGHT ON A PLAYGROUND SLIDE.

SHE GALVANIZED AN ENTIRE INDUSTRY TO ACT, WORKING WITH CPSC TO GET THEM TO REMOVE THE DRAWSTRINGS THAT HAD CAUSED TWENTY DEATHS TO CHILDREN.

AND I THINK OF COLIN BURNS.

HE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO UNDO WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.

BUT HE WAS WILLING TO HELP US HELP OTHERS.

AND SEEING THIS SMART, LIVELY KID GIVING INTERVIEW AFTER INTERVIEW TO HELP OTHERS -- WITH HIS EYE IN -- WAS AN INSPIRATION NOT JUST TO ME BUT TO EVERY ONE OF US.

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

THAT'S ALWAYS THE CASE WITH SAFETY ISSUES.

YOU DON'T SEE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ABOUT THE LITTLE
GIRL WHO SLID SAFELY DOWN THE SLIDE...

OR THE YOUNG BOY WHO DIDN'T LOSE HIS EYE PLAYING
WITH FIREWORKS.

BUT THEY ARE OUT THERE.

AND THE FACT IS, THEY ARE OUT THERE IN INCREASING
NUMBERS BECAUSE OF PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

IN THE END, WE EACH HAVE TO GO BACK TO OUR
NEIGHBORHOODS AND OUR HOMES.

WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR KIDS ARE NOT
WEARING CLOTHES WITH DRAWSTRINGS.

THAT THEY'RE NOT HANDLING FIREWORKS.

THE MISSION OF MY AGENCY IS TO DO JUST THAT.

AND SO I HOPE THAT EACH OF YOU WILL ACCEPT MY
INVITATION TO WORK WITH US AT CPSC.

THAT'S HOW WE WILL MAKE SURE OUR CHILDREN ARE SAFE.

REMEMBER, COLIN HAS HIS EYE ON YOU.

IN A FEW YEARS, WHEN YOU HAVE ME BACK HERE -- FOR A SECOND PERFORMANCE -- I'M CONFIDENT WE'LL BE ABLE TO POINT TO MORE EXAMPLES OF THE LIFESAVING WORK WE HAVE DONE IN THAT SAME SPIRIT.

FOR, UNLIKE A SHAW PLAY, WHEN IT COMES TO SAFETY, THERE IS NO LAST ACT, THE CURTAIN NEVER FALLS -- AND OUR WORK IS NEVER DONE.