

MECAP NEWS

MEDICAL EXAMINERS AND CORONERS ALERT PROJECT

Directorate for Epidemiology – U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission – Bethesda, MD

The Medical Examiners and Coroners Alert Project (MECAP) is designed to collect timely information on deaths involving consumer products. Please contact us whenever you encounter a death or situation which you believe should be considered during a safety evaluation of a product. Please call our toll free number, 1-800-638-8095 or fax number 1-800-809-0924 to report a case or inquire about reporting a case.



The CPSC's mission is "to protect the public against unreasonable risks of injuries and deaths associated with consumer products". The first step in performing this mission is to identify hazardous products. CPSC identifies such products primarily by reviewing injury and death reports from a variety of reporting sources throughout the country. These reporting sources include a national hospital emergency department reporting system, death certificates, news clips, fire department reports, reports received through a national toll-free telephone hotline for consumers and perhaps, most important of all, the medical examiner and coroner reporting network.

Reports on fatalities are the most valuable reports we receive. Most fatality reports come from one of two sources. Currently the largest number of reports comes from the death certificate reporting system. Even though death certificates are received from all states, they cover a limited number of deaths, and are often received long after the fatality occurred and frequently contain limited information on the products involved and incident scenario. With this delay, the product has usually been discarded, recall of the details of the incident and product by witness or investigators has eroded and most importantly, valuable time for implementing remedial strategies has been lost.

We have found that medical examiners and coroners provide our most valuable information because you provide timely reporting of product-related fatalities before the product has been discarded and the details of the incident and product use are still fresh in the minds of witnesses and investigators. Prompt reporting also permits fast action by the Commission to remove hazardous products from the marketplace. Due to resource constraints, not all incidents are investigated by CPSC, but every fatality reported to us is very important and helps identify potentially unsafe products in need of remedial action. We keep track of the number of product-related fatalities in every category, ranging from falls down stairs to swimming pool drownings.

Every reported case is screened to determine if there is a hazardous product involvement. Often, all it takes is one MECAP report to alert CPSC to a hazardous product. Such was the case following the first report of an infant fatality occurring on an infant cushion. One medical examiner's report led to the recall of millions of these cushions and a ban on their manufacture and sale. An initial report of a fatality involving a portable crib in the central US was followed by reports in other parts of the country and this product was recalled. The Commission was first alerted to the problem of infants drowning in five gallon buckets by a MECAP report. CPSC is working with the bucket manufacturers on a national public information program. A voluntary standard has been set which provides for warning labels on all new buckets sold. In addition, the Commission has initiated a rulemaking activity to address the hazard. The safety standards and devices applied to chain saws were developed after Commission engineers and industry representatives studied the MECAP reports of chain saw-related deaths. Chain saw related fatalities have decreased dramatically in the years since implementation of the new standards. These are only a few of the remedial actions taken on hazardous products detected through MECAP.

So please report all of your product-related cases to us. They are all important and help us to carry out our mission.

Thank you.

We have upgraded our CPSC homepage to include the MECAP News. The MECAP News is no longer published and sent via mail. It can be accessed at: www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/mecap.aspx.

The link for past editions of the Consumer Product Safety Review that included the MECAP News is: www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/cpsr.html.

ONLINE MECAP reporting is also encouraged via the link: www.saferproducts.gov.

MECAP

As background, the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA) was signed into law in 1972, subsequently establishing the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in 1973. The Commission is charged with the responsibility of:

- Protecting the public against unreasonable risks of injury associated with consumer product;
- Assisting consumers in evaluating the comparative safety of consumer products;
- Developing uniform safety standards for consumer products; and
- Promoting research and investigation into the causes and prevention of product-related deaths, illnesses and injuries.

The Commission's mission also includes functions provided for in such acts as the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (FHSA), the Flammable Fabrics Act (FFA), the Refrigerator Safety Act (RSA) and the Poison Prevention Packing Act (PPPA).

The Directorate for Epidemiology (EP) is responsible for the collection, investigation, analysis and dissemination of product-related injury information. In order to monitor incidents involving consumer products, the Division of Hazard and Injury Data Systems (under EP) operates an injury surveillance system comprised of statistically selected hospitals reporting sources throughout the country which combined, make up the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS). The NEISS hospitals report (consumer) product-related emergency room injury visits to the CPSC daily for continuous monitoring by program analysts and statisticians.

Additionally, injury information is also collected from sources outside NEISS. These sources include news media reports, consumer complaints, death certificates, trade information and the Medical Examiners and Coroners Alert Project (MECAP). The MECAP was originally designed (in 1976) as a quick alert system whereby medical examiners and coroners throughout the country could voluntarily call CPSC on a toll-free telephone line to report product-related deaths where the product played a significant role in the accident sequence. The program relied on a monthly newsletter (MECAP NEWS) to publicize the program and maintain awareness of the reporting requirements/procedures.

Over 9,000 valuable cases including many supporting standards development (e.g. chain saws and power mowers) and many supporting product recalls (e.g. cribs involved in asphyxiations, squeeze toy involved in choking deaths) were collected. The MECAP NEWS is no longer distributed via mail. It is located on our CPSC website at www.cpsc.gov, click "what's popular" and select MECAP.

Because of the notable success of MECAP, a major expansion effort is being undertaken to encourage increased reporting by medical examiners and coroners, particularly those responsible for major areas (states, large counties and large cities).

The Commission's jurisdiction is extensive, obviously. A general rule which can be applied is that, if the death was accidental and a consumer product was involved, we are interested in the case.

If you suspect a defective or particularly hazardous product caused an accidental death, please contact us immediately, via phone at 1-800-638-8096, website: <https://www.saferproducts.gov/CPSRMSPublic/Incidents/ReportIncident.aspx> or fax at 1-800-809-0924.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you're unsure of reporting a case.

The following items are not under CPSC's jurisdiction and death associated with these products should be reported only if a consumer product is also involved:

- Motor vehicles that are licensed for operation on public roads
- Firearms (except air rifles and BB guns)
- Foods, cosmetics and medical devices
- Aircraft, ultra-lights, hang gliders
- Boats, life jackets, and other boating equipment
- Products used solely in industrial or commercial environments (work-related injuries involving a consumer are, however of interest to us)



CPSC REPORTING GUIDELINE FOR MEDICAL EXAMINER OFFICES

Deaths in the following categories should be reported to CPSC if the death is considered accidental:

Children's Deaths	Deaths Related to Fire or Electrical Outlets	Deaths Related to Power Equipment	Deaths Related to Sports and Recreation
<p><i>All children's deaths involving products manufactured for use by children, or other hazardous products; some examples are:</i></p>	<p><i>All electrocutions or fire deaths involving products found in or around the home; some examples are:</i></p>	<p><i>All deaths involving powered and un-powered tools and equipment, some examples are:</i></p>	<p><i>All deaths involving sports activities/equipment and other recreation products: some examples are:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEDS youth, bunk, water, crib etc. • PLAYPENS • BASSINETS • INFANT CARRIERS • STROLLERS • BABY/INFANT WALKERS • BABY/INFANT SWINGS • PACIFIERS • TOYS • BALLOONS • WHEELED RIDING TOYS: powered and un-powered • SWIMMING POOLS • PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT: swings, slides, climbing apparatus, and surface • BUCKET DROWNING • BATHTUBS • SUFFOCATIONS: plastic bags, infant pillows • SMALL PARTS/CHOKING: games, toys, marbles, balloons • POISONINGS: medicines and chemicals • BABY GATES • WINDOW CORDS • BICYCLES • ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATV'S) • HIGHCHAIRS • TOY CHEST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HAIR DRYERS • EXTENSION CORDS • OUTLETS/ RECEPTACLES • STOVES/OVENS • REFRIGERATORS • FREEZERS • MICROWAVES • BLENDERS/CHOPPERS • TOASTERS • TOASTER OVENS • COFFEEMAKERS • TELEVISIONS • STEREOS/RADIOS • VACUUMS • BUFFERS/POLISHERS • PORTABLE HEATERS • HEATING SYSTEMS • WATER HEATERS • WASHING MACHINES • DRYERS • ELECTRICAL WIRING • TELEPHONES • CHRISTMAS LIGHTS • FANS • HEAT TAPE • IRONS • ANTENNAS: outdoor, CB & TV • LAMPS • LIGHT FIXTURES • BATTERIES • BATTERY CHARGERS • CIRCUIT BREAKERS • FUSES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHAIN SAWS • PORTABLE SAWS powered and unpowered • ATV'S • PORTABLE HAND TOOLS: powered and unpowered • LAWN MOWERS: walk behind and riding • GARDEN TRACTORS • GARDEN TILLERS • GARAGE DOORS: automatic openers • DRILLS • GRINDERS/POLISHERS • WELDING EQUIPMENT • TABLE SAWS • SNOW BLOWERS • LOG SPLITTERS • PRUNING/TRIMMING EQUIPMENT: powered and un-powered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMUSEMENT RIDES • BASEBALL • FOOTBALL • BASKETBALL • SOCCER • VOLLEYBALL • HOCKEY • RACQUET BALL • SCUBA DIVING • SWIMMING/POOLS • DIVING/POOLS • SKIING (water and snow) • ATV'S, DUNE BUGGIES • DIRT BIKES • MOTORCROSS BIKE • BICYCLES/HELMETS • GO-CARTS • WRESTLING (organized) • MOPEDS, SCOOTERS (powered and unpowered) • TENNIS • GOLF CARTS • FISHING • BB, PELLET OR CAP GUNS • FIREWORKS • WATER SLIDES • ALPINE SLIDES • HORSEBACK RIDING • LAWN DARTS



CPSC REPORTING GUIDELINE FOR MEDICAL EXAMINER OFFICES

Deaths in the following categories should be reported to CPSC if the death is considered accidental:

Deaths from Fires and Burns	Deaths from Drowning	Poisonings (including gas) and Asphyxiations	Deaths Involving-Household Structures
<p><i>All fire or burn deaths where the source of ignition was a consumer product; some examples are:</i></p>	<p><i>All drowning or submersion incidents involving a consumer product; some examples are:</i></p>	<p><i>All incidents of suffocation/ asphyxiation and, where a child ingested a medicine or other item (NOT FOOD) causing a death; some examples are:</i></p>	<p><i>All deaths involving causes of falls where the surface or cause (product) of the fall can be identified; some examples are:</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MATCHES • CIGARETTE LIGHTERS • HOT WATER HEATERS • OIL/WOOD/COAL STOVES • PORTABLE HEATERS (kerosene, space radiators, etc.) • CLOTHING IGNITION (daywear, nightwear, bedding, etc.) • FURNITURE (sofas, beds, etc.) • GAS EXPLOSIONS • GRILLS • COOKWARE/STOVES • FLEXIBLE GAS CONNECTORS • SCALDS • FURNACES • SMOKE DETECTORS • HEAT TAPE • CO POISONING FROM MALFUNCTIONING HEATING DEVICES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPA/HOT • TUBS/WHIRLPOOLS • FLOTATION DEVICES • BUCKET • DROWNING (infants) • BATHTUB • SWIMMING POOLS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLASTIC BAGS • WINDOW CORDS • WATER BEDS • REGULAR BEDS • INFANT PILLOWS • ASPIRATION OF SMALL PARTS/TOYS • DRUGS (in child resistant containers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAIRS/STEPS • RAMPS/LANDINGS • FLOORS • LADDERS (including contact with power lines) • STOOLS • WINDOWS • WINDOW GLASS • DOORS (garage and non garage) • SCAFFOLDING • CARPET, RUGS • RUNNERS, MATS • COUNTER TOPS • RAILINGS • BATHTUBS • SHOWERS • ELEVATORS • ESCALATORS



What is a “Consumer Product Related Death”

Our definition of a *consumer product related death* includes all poisonings and chemical burns to children under 5 years and all cases where the scenario mentions a consumer product, sports or recreation activity; defined as external forces; mechanical energy, chemicals and poisons, electricity, etc.

Report all deaths resulting from falls when a consumer product is involved. Only report deaths (i.e., syncope, CVA, cardiac arrest, seizure, etc.) associated with a fall if there is a consumer product associated with the onset, and there is a possibility that the illness was brought about as a result of the fall. Do not assume *floor* unless it is explicitly mentioned in the scenario.

A consumer product is any article produced or distributed for use by a consumer in or around a home, school or recreational area.

Some examples of scenarios which qualify and should be reported are listed below:

- Poisonings (ingestions) and chemical burns to children under 5 associated with drugs, medications or any other substance.
- Deaths which occur during sports or recreational activities. Deaths associated with bicycles even if a motor vehicle was involved.
- Deaths associated with stairs, ramps, floors, walls, elevators, escalators, etc. wherever available for use by consumers.
- Deaths which mention any kind of infant or nursery equipment.
- Deaths associated with toys and games.
- Deaths that occur from burns, anoxia which result from fires of fabrics, household goods, home heating and cooling equipment, etc.

It is not necessary to determine that a product was at fault to report an associated injury or death. Please report all cases which meet the CPSC criteria.

If in doubt, report the case and we will make the determination if it is in-scope.

Examples of Consumer Product Related Deaths

We are interested in all cases involving consumer products, even “*fell down steps*,” “*hit head on door*,” “*fell off ladder*,” etc. Listed below are some examples with the type of products underlined:

- A 2 1/2 year old died when she was found unresponsive in her grandmother’s swimming pool.
- A man, age 64, died when he fell off a ladder while trimming a tree.
- A 37 year-old male decedent apparently fell in his bathroom and was found lying between the toilet and tub.
- A man, age 22, died of head injuries when he fell down a stairwell of 20 steps while at a club.
- A 32 year-old female decedent fell while hiking on a trail. She sustained multiple traumatic injuries.
- A man died in an ATV accident after he was riding a four-wheeler without helmet and crashed.
- A 4-year-old victim tipped over a TV.
- A 34 year old male decedent was found in his home with a generator. Cause of Death: carbon monoxide poisoning.



Instructions for Filing a MECAP Report

You have many options to choose from in reporting medical examiners reports:

Phone: 1-800-638-8095 – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Fax: 1-800-809-0924 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Mail: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Medical Examiners and Coroners Alert Project (MECAP)
Attn: Yolanda Nash
4330 East-West Highway, Suite 604
Bethesda, MD 20814

Internet: <http://www.saferproducts.gov/CPSRMSPublic/Incidents/ReportIncident.aspx>

To file a report or if you have questions, call 1-800-638-8095. This toll-free telephone number is in operation 24 hours a day. When you leave your message please say, "This is a MECAP Report." Your call will be returned by one of the MECAP staff.

Please include as much of the following information where available:

- Description of the incident sequence (age, sex, what, where, when how)
- Date of death
- Cause of death
- Type of consumer product involved (including manufacturer and model, if available)
- City and state where the incident occurred
- Coroner and Medical Examiner case number
- Availability of the product for inspection
- Contact information for any state or local personnel who investigated the incident
- Your name, address, and phone number

Do not report the following unless there is a consumer product involved in the incident.

Excluded from the jurisdiction of the CPSC are:

1. Articles not customarily produced or distributed for sale or used around a household or residence, a school, in recreation, or otherwise.
2. Articles or products under the jurisdiction of other government agencies:
 - Tobacco products (Treasury Department)
 - Licensed motor vehicles and their equipment (Department of Transportation)
 - Pesticides, rodenticides, and fungicides (Environmental Protection Agency)
 - Licensed aircraft and their equipment (Federal Aviation Administration)
 - Licensed boats and their equipment (U.S. Coast Guard)
 - Drugs, medical devices, cosmetics, and food (Food and Drug Administration)

IF IN DOUBT, PLEASE REPORT IT!

