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New Window Covering Voluntary Standard is Step in Right Direction But Unsafe Corded Products Still Available for Sale and in People's Homes

Washington, DC- A new version of the window covering voluntary standard has been approved that, for the first time, will require some window coverings to be cordless. The standard requires window coverings sold as stock products (products sold “as is” in terms of color, design features, size) to be free of dangerous accessible cords. This is an important step forward in reducing the number of dangerous corded products put into the market.

But as human factors psychologist, Dr. Carol Pollack-Nelson warns, “Consumers - especially parents and grandparents - should not get the wrong impression and think that all window coverings are safe.” Here is what consumers need to know:

1. Stock Products - window coverings bought off the shelf - should be cordless by the end of 2018. These will be the safest option.
2. Custom products - products that can be customized to consumers’ specifications – will still be allowed to have hazardous cords. Insist on cord-free products when purchasing custom.
3. Products in homes often have accessible hazardous cords that pose a risk of strangulation. Replace with cord-free window coverings.
4. Watch out for on-line products that may still be sold with cords.. Insist on cord-free.
5. Window coverings in multi-use dwellings, hotels, and apartment buildings, could have hazardous cords. Keep sleep and play areas free of cords.

This updated version of the ANSI/WCMA standard was preceded by decades of mounting death and injuries caused by window covering cords, and extensive advocacy efforts by our organizations and others to protect children from the strangulation hazard posed by these cords. As a recently published Pediatrics journal article reported, approximately eleven children die and 80 children are treated for entanglement and near fatal injuries every year as a result of window cord strangulation.

“For the first time, this voluntary standard requires that some window coverings be cordless. This is a step in the right direction,” stated Rachel Weintraub, legislative director and general

Counsel with Consumer Federation of America. “However, it is troubling that the standard continues to allow cords on custom products. We urge a reopening of the voluntary standard to address this immediately.”

“We are hopeful that eliminating cords on stock products will reduce deaths and injuries in the future. Consumers should junk their cords and #GoCordless. Our major concern is that non-compliant products could be sold online and that the flood of hazardous corded stock inventory will be liquidated throughout 2018. Consumers should not be lured by cheap corded prices,” stated Linda Kaiser, president and founder of Parents for Window Blind Safety.

It is important to note that this window covering voluntary standards is not mandatory and not enforceable by the CPSC.

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of more than 250 non-profit consumer and cooperative groups that was founded in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education. www.consumerfed.org

Parents for Window Blind Safety is a nonprofit organization founded by Matt and Linda Kaiser. PFWBS was created to support parents whose children have been seriously injured or killed by dangerous cords, to educate consumers about the dangers of accessible window covering cords in homes, daycare facilities, and military housing, to help create safer standards in the industry, to encourage innovation of safer products in the industry, and to test window coverings products for safety. www.parentsforwindowblindsafety.org

Carol Pollack Nelson, Ph.D. is a Human Factors Psychologist specializing in consumer product safety. She is an advisor to all stakeholders including manufacturers, retailers, test laboratories, government agencies, and consumer organizations. She previously served as an in-house expert for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission in the Human Factors Division.