Rebuilding Market Confidence in Consumer Products - The Perspective of Consumers

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Outline

- Current Situation or Landscape

- Consumer expectations

- Issues from perspective of consumers

  - Recalls, unapproved products, counterfeit products

- Solutions – legislative, role of standards

- Consumer Policy Committee of ISO's WG on Consumer Product Safety.

Current Situation

- Free trade economy and open market.
- Journey from factory floor to retail shelf often spans the globe.
- Open markets are built on consumer confidence
- Recalls resulted in loss of consumer confidence
  e.g. searching for toys not made in China
- Consumer product safety legislation with limited powers
- Gaps in certification procedures and policies
- With price pressures and increased importation – problems expected to increase
- Complex, decentralized recall system - federal and provincial agencies, each with their own criteria, rules and procedures.

Expectations of Consumers

- Consumers expect that as long as they follow directions, the product will be safe to use
- Industry is responsible for designing and marketing safe products
- Transparency about hazards associated with products
- Government will prevent unsafe products from entering the Canadian market
- Hazardous products stopped from being marketed, rather than relying on after-the-fact recalls
- Consumers expect choice, quality and value for money

Recall of Regulated Products

Design Flaws
-small parts, magnets, sharp edges
Independent of location

Manufacturing Flaws
-Poor assembly,
- unacceptable raw materials

Rail height to low – falling hazard

Majestic Flat Top Crib
Model # 0000

Small part choking hazard

Date rape chemical on surface

Lead in paint

Certified Products Recalled
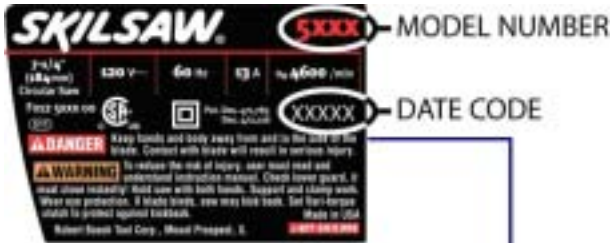
CBs certify products to a standard
Recalled – in use product found to be
defective or has caused injury
-Manufacturing flaw
-Inadequate standard

Air Exchange
System – fire hazard
UL mark

SKILSAW. 5XXX — MODEL NUMBER

XXXXX — DATE CODE

Skil saw –
CSA Cert.
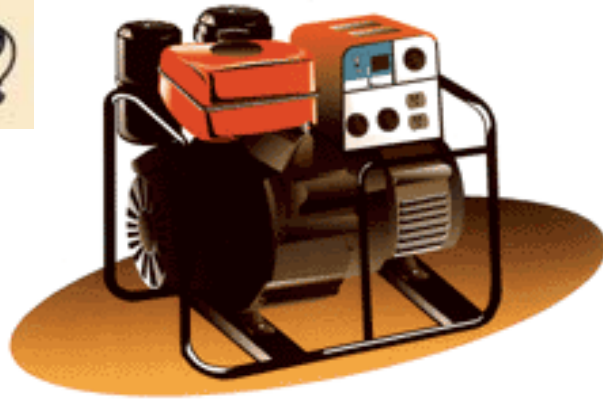switch can be
locked in on
position

Humidifier
leakage into
electrical
components
Intertek mark

36200

Unapproved Electrical Products

Alerts published by ESA

Rug warmers
can cause fire hazard

Lamp can overheat
and cause fire

Unapproved gas generator
Exhibits many safety problems

The Gaps/Grey Areas

Bicycle Trailer –
coupling failure,
voluntary recall
negotiated by Health
Canada

Bicycles – frame failure

Battery operated tools

Counterfeit Products or Marks

Crafting Iron with
Counterfeit Mark
Warning by CSA –
March 11, 2008

Counterfeit
Thermal Detector
Warning by ULC –
March 20, 2008
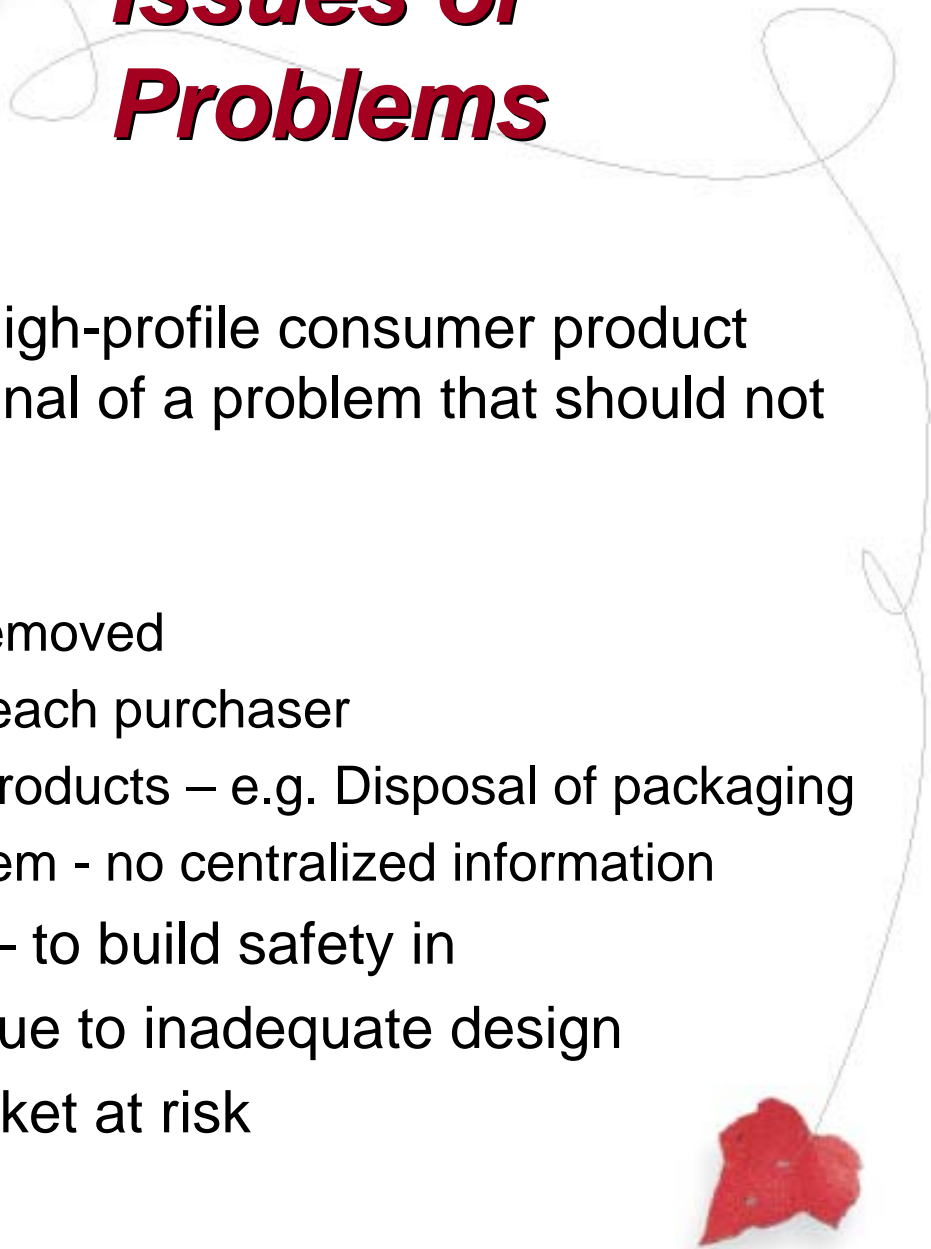
Counterfeit
Batteries
RCMP
Report
Winter 2006

Issues or Problems

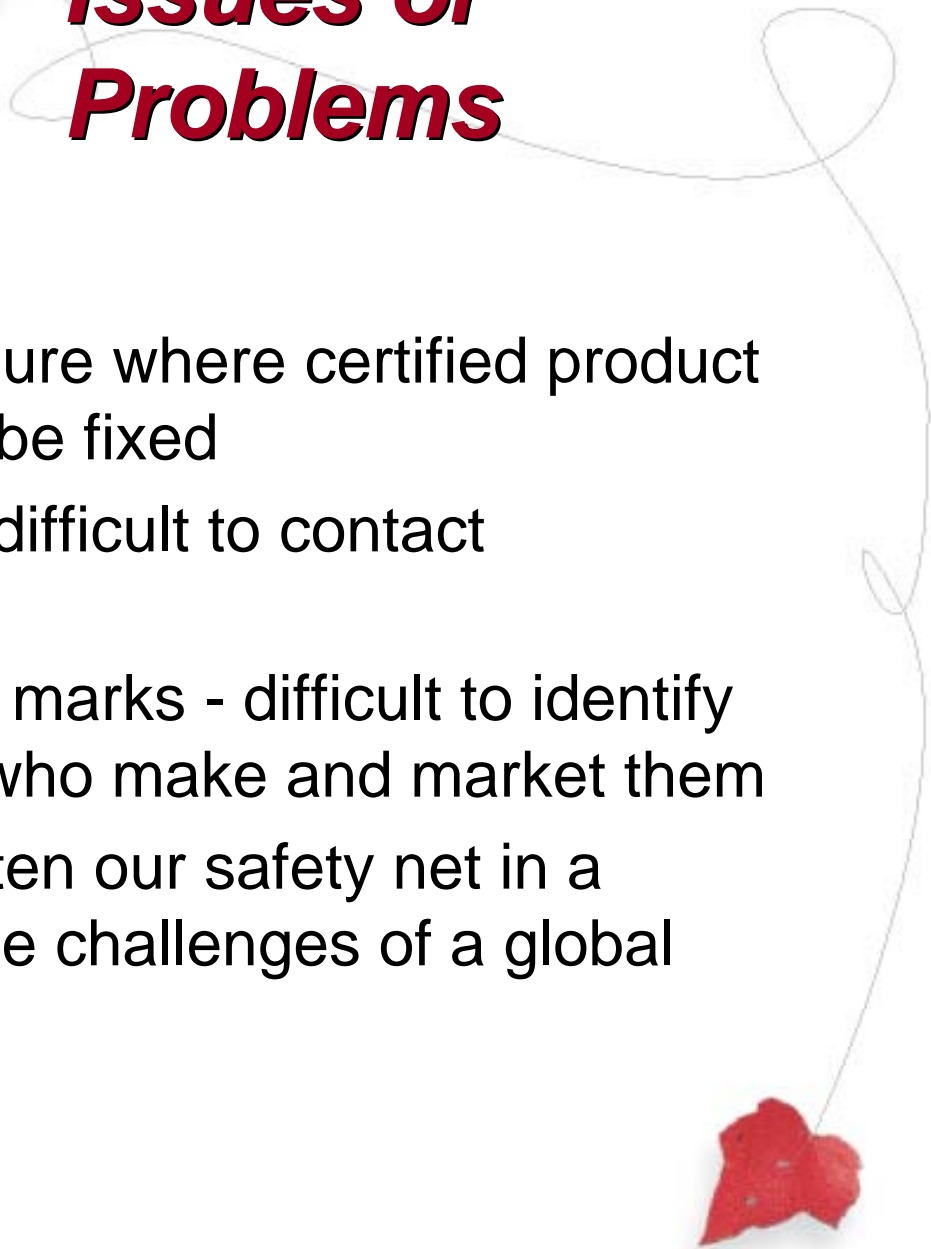- Too many and too frequent high-profile consumer product recalls have given a clear signal of a problem that should not and cannot be ignored
- Effectiveness of recalls
  - Small percentage actually removed
  - Information often does not reach purchaser
  - Difficult to identify recalled products – e.g. Disposal of packaging
  - Complex decentralized system - no centralized information
- Lack of proactive measures – to build safety in
- Design - 80% of toy recalls due to inadequate design
- Consumer confidence in market at risk

Issues or Problems

- No clear policy or procedure where certified product causes harm and has to be fixed
- Complex supply chain – difficult to contact manufacturer
- Counterfeit products and marks - difficult to identify and trace back to those who make and market them
- How to continuously tighten our safety net in a sustained way to meet the challenges of a global economy.

Solutions

- New legislation – Proposed federally and implemented provincially – gives the tools.

- Centralized recall data base - Health Canada initiated

- Product related injury data base

- Improved safety standards and quality assurance procedures

- Information to consumers about the problems associated with constant price reduction

- Mechanisms for the traceability of products

- Increased involvement of custom authorities to prevent unsafe products from entering the country

Role for Standards Community

- Product Safety Standards can be effective in designing safe products and reducing injuries
- More effective than recalls
  - Proactive and can have impact on whole class of products
  - Eliminate hazards in product before it is produced
- Factors to be considered when developing standards
  - Potential users and their abilities
  - Foreseeable use patterns
  - Holistic approach to safety of product
  - Performance based/ horizontal standards to keep up with technological change

COPOLCO WG on Product Safety

Purpose:

"**To promote the design and manufacture of safe consumer products through the work of COPOLCO and ISO.**"

Work Underway

- Guidance standard on Consumer Product Safety - to provide practical tools to suppliers to identify, assess and eliminate risks related to consumer products

- Proposal to revise Guide 51

- Role for standards in identifying data elements required for product related injury data collection

- Domestic water treatment devices

- Adequacy of instructions - assembly, maintenance & use

- Monitor development of Nanotechnology standards

Questions???

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