

# News and notes

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

John Howard, Director of Safety Policy at the UK's Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, has been appointed RoSPA's new Chief Executive. Mr Howard joined the Society 19 years ago from industry as Director of Home and Leisure Safety. He later became responsible for road safety as well, and then in 1992 for all areas of RoSPA's campaigning, including safety at work.

## NEW COCHRANE REVIEWS

Two new reviews relating to children and young people were published in April: *Graduated driver licensing for reducing motor vehicle crashes among young drivers* and *Helmets for preventing injury in motorcyclists*. Visit <http://www.update-software.com/clibng/cliblogon.htm>. Access to the Cochrane Library is free to people in certain countries.

## CDC INJURY PREVENTION RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

The recently published *Bibliography of Behavioral Science Research in Unintentional Injury Prevention* from CDC includes more than 900 citations of journal articles, book chapters, government reports, and other publications. Designed as a tool for researchers, practitioners and students, this bibliography documents the contributions of behavioral and social sciences to unintentional injury prevention and control from 1980–2003. The CD-Rom includes the complete bibliography in two formats: alphabetical by author, and by injury topic. Citations are also indexed by keyword. The bibliography is part of a CDC effort to take an interdisciplinary approach to injury prevention and to identify innovative strategies from the behavioral and social sciences. For details of how to obtain it on CDC or to download the document, visit [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/behavioral/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/behavioral/default.htm).

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION WEEKLY REPORTS ON SAFETY ALERTS

In February 2004, the European Commission started to publish weekly summaries of the alerts it receives from member states about dangerous non-food consumer products. The first of these is available on the Commission's Consumer Affairs website at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons\\_safe/prod\\_safe/gpsd/rapex\\_en.htm#overviews](http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_safe/prod_safe/gpsd/rapex_en.htm#overviews). The Commission typically receives between two and four alerts each week

via an EU-wide rapid alert system known as RAPEX. The dangers presented often include risks of choking and suffocation, electric shocks, and fires. The type of products most often notified in these alerts are toys, followed by electrical appliances. The RAPEX system was recently strengthened by the coming into force on 15 January of the new revised General Product Safety Directive, which introduced new obligations for businesses to alert the authorities to dangerous products. As well as the weekly reports, the Commission will be publishing quarterly statistics about RAPEX notifications. These too will be available on the Commission's Consumer Affairs website. For more information about the RAPEX system and EU product safety rules see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons\\_safe/prod\\_safe/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_safe/prod_safe/index_en.htm).

## PREVENTING BRIDGE SUICIDES

The authorities have changed their minds and agreed to install some sort of barriers on the Jacques Cartier Bridge in Montreal in the hope this will prevent suicides. Advocates of full barriers argue that the plan does not go far enough, but it is a hopeful sign.

## IMPROVEMENTS IN US CHILD OCCUPANT LAWS SINCE 2001

In a report released in February, the National Safe Kids Campaign announced that 27 US states have upgraded their child occupant protection laws since 2001, with 23 states (up from only two) now covering booster seat-aged children. *Closing the Gaps Across the Map: A Progress Report on SAFE KIDS' Efforts to Improve Child Occupant Protection Laws* reviews improvements to child occupant protection laws since a study three years ago found gaps in coverage related to age, seating position, and lack of appropriate child safety seat use. While there have been major strides in changing laws, more than half of states still do not adequately protect children for whom a booster seat is the appropriate restraint. In 2001, the National Safe Kids Campaign launched a five year initiative to improve state child occupant protection laws. The report notes that more than half of states (26 and the District of Columbia) have upgraded their child occupant protection laws; and 22 states and the District of Columbia now have booster seat laws that require older children to use appropriate child safety seats, as opposed to two

states (California and Washington) in February 2001. The report can be found at [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org).

## APPLYING RISK ASSESSMENT

The Dutch Consumer Safety Institute (CSI) is carrying out a project to gain practical experience with the application of a method to assess serious risks. Such an assessment is an important issue in the implementation and enforcement of the European Union's General Product Safety Directive. When national authorities find that a product on the market poses a serious risk, they are entitled to take emergency measures. The national authorities have considerable autonomy in the implementation of the Directive, but obviously the existence of the EU internal market requires that the assessment of the risks takes place in a consistent and uniform way in the different member states. The GPSD requires the European Commission to prepare guidelines concerning the rapid exchange of information on serious risks. The first step in this task was the development of a method for the assessment risks by Intertek RTC. This method still has to be tested for validity and inter-rater reliability—does the procedure adequately differentiate between products that constitute different risk levels, and are the outcomes largely independent of the person performing the assessment? In the CSI project, a number of test cases will be described; the national authorities of EU member states (including new members) will be asked to apply the method and to report the results back. The researchers will provide explanations and assist in case of interpretation problems, but will not influence the decisions. The results will be subjected to statistical analysis in order to reveal the variation in the answers. Possible explanations for the variation will be given and recommendations will be made for improvements. For more information contact Dirk van Aken (email [d.vanAken@consafe.nl](mailto:d.vanAken@consafe.nl)).

## GUIDE FOR MANUFACTURERS ON CONSUMER PRODUCT INSTRUCTIONS

In October 2003, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) published an 80 page guide for manufacturers to use when developing consumer product instructions. The instruction materials include owner's manuals, assembly instructions, training materials, product repair or

recall information, maintenance and trouble shooting guides, quick reference guides, and storage or disposal information. The guide includes sections on planning instructions, capturing and maintaining attention, securing comprehension, motivating compliance, presenting safety information, and evaluating the instructions. The *Manufacturer's Guide to Developing Consumer Product Instructions* is available in the CPSC electronic library at <http://www.cpsc.gov/library/foia/foia04/os/guide.pdf>.

### EU SEMINAR ON PRODUCT SAFETY

The European Commission is organizing a seminar for consumer associations on non-food product safety monitoring in June 2004. Some of the issues DG SANCO plans to discuss are the importance of the market surveillance and enforcement in ensuring a high level of consumer product safety; the new General Product Safety Directive requirements on market surveillance and enforcement and the relevant Community level procedures (RAPEX, safeguard clauses etc); the present situation of market surveillance in the EU countries and problems encountered; the opportunities and role for consumer associations in the area of consumer product safety monitoring (testing, dialogue with authorities, monitoring the functioning of surveillance systems, collaboration on recalls and consumer information, awareness raising, collection of complaints, etc); and an exchange of experience and best practices of consumer associations on activities related to product safety monitoring.

### MANDATORY US STANDARD FOR BABY BATH SEATS

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) voted unanimously in October to propose a federal mandatory standard for baby bath seats to help prevent drownings. The safety standard will address the hazards of bath seats tipping over and children slipping through the leg openings and becoming entrapped. The proposed standard also will contain a new warning label. The Commission's vote to propose a federal standard is the second step in the three step process to mandate a regulation. After the proposed rule is published, interested parties may submit comments for CPSC to consider. The Commission will consider these comments and other information before deciding whether to issue a final rule. CPSC has reports of 104 drowning deaths and 162 non-fatal incidents involving baby bath seats that occurred from January 1983 to June 2003. Three major hazard

scenarios have been identified: tip-over of the bath seat; children becoming entrapped and submerged in the leg openings; and children climbing out of the bath seat. The Commission proposes a stability test to prevent tip-over; a test to prevent a child from slipping through the leg openings and becoming entrapped; and a new warning label: "Children have drowned while using bath seats. ALWAYS keep baby within arm's reach. This bathing aid is NOT a safety device. Stop using when a child is able to pull up to a standing position".

### ... WHILE IN EUROPE

The European standards committee responsible for childcare articles has decided that it cannot prepare a standard that will provide acceptable levels of safety for baby bath seats and has proposed that the item is deleted from its work programme. Investigations are beginning to see whether these products can be banned from sale.

### INEDIBLES IN FOOD

The *ANEC Newsletter* reports that the European Parliament Scientific and Technical Options Assessment (STOA) Committee has refused to publish a report on inedibles in foods. ANEC has been lobbying for many years to make products offered to children in combination with food safer. Only last year, another child choked to death on a small toy contained in a chocolate egg. Due to the lack of knowledge as to the actual data on how many accidents are happening because of inedibles in food products (for example, small toys in chocolate eggs), the European Parliament decided to launch in 2001—under the auspices of its STOA Committee—a study to assess the present accident status in the EU related to inedibles in food and to propose measures that will make these products safe. All along its drafting stages, the study provoked intense pressure by powerful industrial concerns to drop the subject. And although the final report of the study on inedibles in food was approved by independent scientists, the STOA Panel decided in February 2004 to vote against the publication of the report. The report actually describes low but not negligible risks.

### SCALD CONCERNS IN NEW ZEALAND

The latest issue of Safety Update from New Zealand's Plunket Society highlights the high risk of tap water scalds, reporting on research from the Household Energy End-Use Project. The HEEP research reveals several factors that contribute to dangerously hot water in homes, including inaccurate

thermostats in 30% of households; small hot water cylinders necessitating high stored water temperatures; and a lack of delivered-water temperature control.

### EURO NCAP RATING FOR CHILD PROTECTION

The European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) which rates the safety of new cars, has introduced a new rating for child passenger protection. This rating is for a combination of a car with specific child seats that have been recommended by the car manufacturer. The combination can now earn up to five stars for child protection. The rating depends on the fitting instructions for the child seats, the car's ability to accommodate them safely, and their performance in front and side impact tests. However, there are important limitations to this rating:

- The child protection rating cannot be used for the car alone, nor can it be used for the car with a different combination of child seats.
- The tested child seat alone does not have a child protection rating.
- The same child seat tested in combination with other cars may give a different child protection rating.

Information about Euro NCAP and vehicle ratings can be found at <http://www.euroncap.com/>.

### LINKS TO US RECALL INFORMATION

A new website <http://www.recalls.gov/> is now operational and provides links to recall information from seven federal agencies in the US. Consumers now have one central source for all recall information with links to the respective sites.

### EVALUATION OF LIFESKILLS—LEARNING FOR LIVING PROGRAMME

The evaluation of the Lifeskills—Learning for Living programme operated at the safety education and training facility in Bristol has been published. The evaluation, undertaken by Oxford University's Department of Public Health and Oxford Brookes University, concluded that, for many of the aspects of the programme studied, children who had been through it did better than the control group in terms of knowledge and performance three and 12 months after the visit to the centre. The full report can be downloaded from [www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr187.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr187.htm). A summary is obtainable from Lifeskills—Learning for Living, The Create Centre, Smeaton Road, Bristol BS1 6XN, UK.

## BULL BARS

ANEC, the voice of European consumers in standardization, has sent comments to the European Parliament's rapporteur on a proposal for a European Directive on bull bars. ANEC is of the opinion that the European Commission's proposal for a directive on bull bars should in no way present additional risks for pedestrians. ANEC has always been of the opinion that bull bars should be included in a pedestrian protection directive with mandatory state of the art pedestrian performance requirements.

## EUROPEAN SAFE COMMUNITY NETWORK

The European Safe Community Network (ESCON) is a membership network created in response to the international need to share information and resources focused on injury prevention

and safe community concept. The network includes researchers, practitioners, safety promotion officers and community groups, other agencies and institutions working with safe community model. ESCON strategy targets increasing safe communities in Europe. The ESCON network is a connection to current information on injury prevention, safety promotion, and practical ways to achieve and improve safe communities. To join the network, email [rahim@norsafety.no](mailto:rahim@norsafety.no) with your contact details to update the member directory on the European Safe Community Network website [www.safecommunity.net/ESCON/](http://www.safecommunity.net/ESCON/).

## KIDSAFE WEEK

New Zealand's Kidsafe Week takes place from 15–22 October 2004. This year's focus is on preventing motor vehicle

passenger injuries and burns prevention, reinforcing the use of child restraints and seat belts, and how to prevent burns from hot water and fires. Further information is available at [www.kidsafe.org.nz](http://www.kidsafe.org.nz).

## FORMATION OF EUROSAFE

Under the auspices of ECOSA, a new coalition, EuroSafe, is being formed as a think tank for the generation of ideas for the EU's public health and other funding programmes. For further details, visit [www.ecosa.org](http://www.ecosa.org).

Contributors to these news and notes include Ian Scott and Barry Pless. Michael Hayes has edited the contributions. Items for future issues, including calendar entries, should be sent to Michael Hayes at the Child Accident Prevention Trust, 18–20 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3HA, UK, fax +44 (0)20 7608 3674, email [mh@capt.org.uk](mailto:mh@capt.org.uk) as soon as possible.

## LACUNAE .....

### Belt up or else?

The Delaware General Assembly is to consider a teen seatbelt bill that would revoke the driver's license of any 16 or 17 year old found not wearing their seatbelt when driving. The teen drivers would then not be able to drive unless a parent were present for a period of six months. It is reported that the concept is "not popular" among teenagers but that the target group acknowledge it would be a powerful incentive (*Delaware State News*, 10 March 2004, submitted by Ian Scott; from *The CDC Public Health Law News*, March 2004).

### Driving blind in Israel

Israel's embarrassed Transport Ministry has admitted that 2385 people who carry cards signifying they are legally blind have also been issued with valid driver licences (submitted by Ian Scott; from *The Age* (Melbourne), February 2004).

### Good Samaritan drives without license

A Darwin (Australia) man caught driving without a licence told police he was urgently delivering condoms to his cousin. Fined \$100, he was described by a magistrate as "better than the Good Samaritan" (submitted by Ian Scott; from *The Age* (Melbourne), March 2004).