

## NEWS AND NOTES

### People in the news

After seven years as Director of the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), the UK's principal child safety organisation, Carol Sherriff has moved on. She has been appointed chair of a primary care trust, the local statutory health body that oversees the provision of health care, and will also be carrying out training in management methods. The new CAPT Chief Executive is Katrina Phillips, who has come from the National Foster Care Association.

Dr Philip Groff will become SMART-RISK'S Manager of Research Development on 10 September 2001. Dr Groff comes from the Kunin-Lunenfeld Applied Research Unit, having previously been at the Canadian Policy Research Network. Since 1994 Dr Groff has been a course instructor at the University of Toronto's psychology department, where the majority of his courses are on research methods and statistical analysis. At SMARTRISK, Dr Groff will be responsible of the expansion of research capacity both internally and externally in injury prevention research. Key to this position will be building consensus, supporting and moving projects forward, building relationships and collaborating with community and research practitioners in the field of injury prevention. (Please note SMARTRISK'S new office address: 790 Bay Street, Suite 401 Toronto, ON M5G 1N8, tel: +1 416 977 7350, fax: +1 416 596 2700.)

Ian Scott has left the Australian safety organisation, Kidsafe, and is now carrying out freelance research and development work, still in the child safety field. Ian, who is a health economist by training, expects to return to his original profession. Ian can be contacted at PO Box 302, Abbotsford, Victoria 3067; email: ianscott@virtual.net.au.

President Bush tapped a physician with expertise treating car crash victims to head the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The White House announced in June that Bush will nominate Jeffrey William Runge as NHTSA administrator. Dr Runge is currently assistant chairman of the Carolinas Medical Center's department of emergency medicine in Charlotte, NC. The hospital identified his speciality as "injury research including resuscitation, brain injury and traffic safety". In 1996, as a fellow at the NHTSA, he received the Highway Safety Leadership Award. Jeffrey Runge is a past chairman of the American College of Emergency Physicians injury prevention and control subcommittee and currently serves on the organization's trauma care and injury control committee.

### Safety belt adverts aimed at African-Americans

NHTSA has announced the completion of a series of radio public service announcements by the Advertising Council aimed at safety belt education. These announcements focus on seat belt use among African-Americans.

Motor vehicle crashes are the second leading cause of death among African-Americans and seat belt use among this group is four percentage points below the national average. The public service announcements are designed to raise awareness and lead to increases in seat belt use among this population. To hear the safety belt announcements, visit [www.adcouncil.org/safetybelt/radio](http://www.adcouncil.org/safetybelt/radio).

### 125dB limit for impulsive noise from toys—at last

The March issue of the ANEC newsletter reported that the long battle on acoustic requirements for toys may have come to an end, with results for which ANEC had been fighting. The European Commission proposed to European Union member states that it would publish the references of the current toy standard EN 71-1:1998 in the official journal, but without controversial clause 4.20 dB. The exclusion was necessary because the sound level of 140 dB (measured at a distance of 50 cm) was found unsafe after formal objections by Austria and Denmark. This acceptance has to be seen in the light of the intention of CEN, the European standards body, to adopt a 134 dB in the latest version of the draft amendment to the standard. This was found unacceptable by seven member states at the meeting of the Commission's Toys Safety Expert Group in December 2000. The proposed commission decision was a clear signal to CEN not to process the inadequate draft further. ANEC has always been of the opinion that children deserve the same protection against noise exposure as adults, so ANEC felt that the requirements for noise emission from toys should be in line with what people in the workplace can be subjected to (the ANEC newsletter is accessible at [www.anec.org](http://www.anec.org)).

### Record fine against children's product manufacturer

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced in April that Cosco Inc of Columbus, Indiana, and Safety 1st Inc, of Canton, Massachusetts, have agreed to pay a total of \$1.75 million in civil penalties to settle CPSC charges that they failed to report product defects that caused serious injuries and deaths to children. Cosco paid \$1.3 million to settle CPSC charges that it knowingly withheld information about defects with its cribs, strollers, car seat carriers, and high chairs. In each case, Cosco made design or label changes to the products after receiving injury and incident reports from consumers, but failed to inform CPSC about the hazards presented by those products in homes or the shops. Two babies died and more than 300 children were injured while using the products. Safety 1st paid \$450 000 to settle similar CPSC charges. Although the companies agreed to pay the civil penalties, Cosco and Safety 1st deny the charges. Dorel, the parent company of Cosco and Safety 1st, has pledged to CPSC that it is making reforms to eliminate any future reporting problems and to continue to improve the quality of its products. In the past 10 years Cosco has had 12 recalls of children's products and Safety 1st has had five recalls. Both companies have been penalized in the past for failure to comply with reporting requirements. In 1996, Cosco paid a \$725 000 civil penalty while in 1998 Safety 1st paid a \$175 000 penalty.

### Recall of disposable lighters after 4 year old dies

In April, a California company voluntarily recalled about 13 million disposable lighters, the lighters' child resistant mechanisms being frequently ineffective. Young children are able to operate the lighters, posing a fire hazard. CPSC and the company have received a report of a 4 year old girl who died after starting a fire with a lighter and then hid in a closet. In another incident, two brothers, aged 4 and 6 years, reportedly ignited clothing and paper inside a car while playing with one of these lighters. According to CPSC data, the standard for child resistant lighters and novelty lighters has helped reduce fire deaths from children playing with lighters by 43% since 1994 and should help save more than 100 lives each year.

### Another huge US recall

US child restraint giant, Evenflo, is recalling about 3.4 million Joyride infant car seats and carriers, CPSC and NHTSA announced in May. When the seat is used as an infant carrier, the handle can unexpectedly release, causing the seat to flip forward. When this happens, an infant inside the carrier can fall to the ground and suffer serious injuries. There have been 240 reports in the US of handles unexpectedly releasing, resulting in 97 injuries, including skull fractures, concussions, a broken leg, and numerous scratches and bruises.

### "Bouncy castle" death

A child in Adelaide, Australia was killed and an adult and five other children seriously injured when a "bouncy castle" amusement device broke its restraints and became airborne. The devices are inflated plastic with three sides and a floor in which children play; they are commonly used at shows and community events. Kidsafe Australia has been able to identify at least four other occasions in which the wind has caused these devices to become airborne and caused significant injury. Other injuries identified have been with children falling from the open side and with body clashes between children. A detailed investigation is under way before a coronial hearing. It is thought likely, on the basis of letters to the *British Medical Journal* that bouncy castles are an injury risk in other jurisdictions.

### NEISS expanded to all injuries

The CPSC's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) has expanded from a system that collects hospital emergency room data on injuries due to consumer products to include emergency room data on all injuries. Currently, NEISS collects data from 100 hospitals for nationwide injury estimates. State-by-state data are not yet available but the potential for increasing knowledge of the scope and depth of injuries—particularly those injuries that do not require inpatient treatment—is enormous. See [www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/3002.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/3002.html) for further information.

### World forum for harmonisation of vehicle regulations

ANEC, through Consumers International, participated in the March 2001 meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe meeting of Working Party 29, the World Forum for Harmonisation of Vehicle Regulations. Consumer groups are monitoring the work of this body carefully as industry in general is taking a lead in drafting the harmonised regulations they favour. There is a risk that this will distort the work programme and deliver global regulations that increase industrial convenience rather than delivering a high level of safety and actually reducing casualty numbers on the roads. Consumers International has drafted a paper outlining its priorities for work under the Global Agreement, containing detailed proposals made by consumer groups.

### Effective interventions for preventing motor vehicle related injuries

A special report, *Motor Vehicle Occupant Injury: Strategies for Increasing Use of Child Safety Seats, Increasing Use of Safety Belts, and Reducing Alcohol-Impaired Driving* was published on May 18 in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report—Reports and Recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The report is the result of an extensive systematic review of scientific literature and describes interventions found to be effective at increasing the use of child safety seats, increasing the use of safety belts, and reducing alcohol impaired driving. The Task Force on Community Preventive Services, an independent, non-federal panel of community health experts, issued these recommendations based on reviews conducted by CDC scientists. Access the full report at [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5007a1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5007a1.htm) or find an overview of the findings, recommendations, and a summary of each of the recommended interventions at [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/mvsafety.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/mvsafety.htm).

### ANEC calls for reform of the European standardization system

ANEC has published a position paper addressing its major concerns and the requests consumers have with respect to the principles of European standardisation, greater involvement of public authorities, efficiency, financing, and international standardisation. As the leading article in the April issue of the ANEC newsletter notes, provided that the standardisation process is transparent and open to participation of all concerned parties, European standards are useful means of providing consumer protection and consumer safety. To improve the democratic structure, ANEC calls for a reform of the European standardisation system by submitting 12 recommendations, including better balanced representation of the various interests, the establishment of a dispute settlement procedure open to all stakeholders, improved market surveillance, stable and adequate funding for consumer participation at all levels, and safeguard measures with respect to international standardisation. A revision of the European standardisation system is even more vital in the light of the wider discussion on alternative regulatory models (so called co-regulation). To protect the public interest,

the European Commission proposes alternative regulatory models from legislation and its binding nature to the more flexible self-regulatory approach.

### Doctors and gun control

The US continues to struggle with the toll of firearm deaths, although 1998 data showed a decline over previous years. In an effort to bring a comprehensive medical perspective to the problem of handgun injury, a coalition of medical societies has released a statement of principles that spells out specific initiatives they believe can reduce the level of death and injury associated with handguns. Doctors Against Handgun Injury (DAHI), consists of 13 clinical and professional medical societies including the American Medical Association. DAHI believes efforts to reduce the deaths and injuries caused by handguns should be examined from a perspective based in science and rooted in the established principles of public health policy. To learn more about DAHI's recommendations, go to [www.doctorsagainsthandinjury.org/index.html](http://www.doctorsagainsthandinjury.org/index.html).

On a related note, a new report<sup>1</sup> from the US discusses the Massachusetts model of handgun regulation in which the Attorney General is given jurisdiction to regulate handguns as consumer products. Includes overviews of laws in 20 states which empower Attorneys General or other state commissions to regulate handguns as consumer products.

### New Injury Research Centre in Australia

The new Injury Research Centre at the University of Western Australia is building on the existing Road Accident Prevention Research Unit, established in the Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, in 1989. The aim of the unit has been to conduct research directed towards minimising the frequency and consequences of road traffic crashes in Western Australia. Since its inception, the Road Accident Prevention Research Unit has developed a reputation for high quality research and has become one of the lead agencies for road safety research both in the state and nationally. In July 2001, the Road Accident Prevention Research Unit extended its expertise in the study of road traffic related injury to all areas of unintentional and intentional injury and has been renamed the Injury Research Centre. The centre brings together individuals and groups with expertise in medicine, epidemiology, statistics, computer science, database management and data record linkage, psychology and behavioural science, health economics, health promotion, program evaluation and injury biomechanics. The mission of the centre is to apply a public health approach to the identification, prevention, and control of injuries. Its vision is to reduce the occurrence, severity, and consequences of injuries through evidence based practice. The research centre will build a research infrastructure that supports integrated basic, strategic, and priority driven research as a platform for the development and implementation of cost effective strategies for injury prevention that address state, national, and international priorities. For further information contact the Director, Associate Professor Mark Stevenson, Road

Accident Prevention Research Unit, Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands WA 6907, Australia, tel: +61 8 9380 1302, fax: +61 8 9380 1199, email: [marks@dph.uwa.edu.au](mailto:marks@dph.uwa.edu.au), web site: [www.publichealth.uwa.edu.au](http://www.publichealth.uwa.edu.au).

### AMA advice on preventing scooter injuries

This column has previously addressed the growing problem of injuries associated with non-motorized scooters. The American Medical Association (AMA) recently encouraged public and private sectors to provide scooter injury prevention information to physicians, parents, and children. In letters to several federal, consumer and public health organizations, the AMA indicated how physicians, medical societies, and other public health organizations can disseminate injury prevention information to counteract the rising number of injuries related to lightweight, fold-up scooters. The letters were written in response to a resolution adopted in December by the AMA House of Delegates that encourages physicians to counsel patients, and their parents when appropriate, that full protective equipment—including certified helmets, elbow and kneepads, and closed toed shoes—should be worn and appropriate safety measures taken to prevent scooter injuries. The resolution was sponsored by eight professional medical organizations.

### Teaching tool to cut child road deaths

Every year almost 6000 children are killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads. Now thanks to a new Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) web site, kids will be able to pick up life saving road safety skills as they study. In an innovative move to help save lives, the web site holds lesson plans for teachers which integrate road safety messages into everyday lessons, improving children's safety knowledge and helping to keep them safe. The web site ([www.schools.detr.gov.uk/primary](http://www.schools.detr.gov.uk/primary)) contains free plans covering key national curriculum subjects, and has been produced for use in primary schools. All of the plans use road safety as a theme or are accompanied by road sign flash cards, posters, or wall friezes. The Road Safety Minister said "This Government is committed to halving the number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 2010. Teaching children about road safety issues helps them to stay safe, but we know that with a busy curriculum teachers can find it difficult to fit in extra subjects. Now children can learn about road signs in their symmetry lessons and find out about wearing seat belts in science. We are educating children and providing a useful service for teachers at the same time". The subjects covered by the new site are numeracy, literacy, personal social and health education, and science. Geography and information and communication technology will be added soon. All the lesson plans are accompanied by downloadable worksheets. Free posters, flashcards, and wall friezes will be available to order soon on a freephone number. The web site [www.schools.detr.gov.uk/primary](http://www.schools.detr.gov.uk/primary) is the first of three new child road safety sites to be launched this year by the DETR. An interactive version of "Arrive Alive—the Highway

Code for young road users”, and a road safety games site will be available soon.

### Red light cameras reduce crashes at junctions

Installing cameras to catch drivers who run red lights does reduce crashes at intersections, according to a new study released by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). IIHS says it found crashes at intersections in Oxnard, California, fell 29% after the installation of the cameras. The most common type of collision that results from running a red light—front-into-side crashes—dropped 32%, while injuries related to those kinds of crashes fell 68%. Happily, the study found that crashes also were reduced at Oxnard intersections that were not monitored. Only 11 of the city’s 125 intersections were equipped with cameras, which take pictures of cars whose drivers run red lights. Violators receive tickets by mail. Traffic signal cameras are currently used in more than 40 communities across the US. Earlier reports have indicated the presence of cameras reduces red light running by about 40%.

Readers interested in agricultural safety should make note of the National Agricultural Safety Database (NASD). This database includes 3000 agricultural health and safety publications, a database of abstracts and ordering information for over 2000 agricultural safety related videos, a resource directory of over 1500 people and organizations involved in agricultural safety and health, slide presentations, posters, conference proceedings, a library of graphics, clip art and photos, sample news releases, training materials, and public service announcement scripts. Visit the NASD site at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/nasdhome.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/nasdhome.html).

### New Zealand KidSafe Week

Preventing childhood poisoning and motor vehicle passenger injuries are the two themes of KidSafe Week, being held from 12–19 October 2001. Plunket Society staff and volunteers are becoming involved in local coalitions and 15 planning days are being run across the country, writes Plunket’s national child safety coordinator Sue Campbell, in the organisation’s magazine *Safety Update*. For further information about Plunket’s safety work, contact Sue Campbell at PO Box 1275, Dunedin, New Zealand, email: [s.campbell@plunket.org.nz](mailto:s.campbell@plunket.org.nz).

### Children inside cars

General Motors has announced the development of a sensor designed to indicate when a vehicle’s interior temperature rises and a

breathing being (child, dog, infant) is detected inside the passenger compartment. A distinct horn alarm would then sound. The new technology will not be available until 2004. One wonders whether this will solve the problem of children left in parked vehicles: will parents feel “safer” engaging this practice, knowing that the alarm will indicate when the vehicle gets too hot? Will passers-by pay any attention to another car alarm, even with a different sound? Meanwhile, more US states are trying to pass laws to make such offences subject to traffic tickets and fines, rather than immediately subject parents to removal of their children. For more information, see [www.kidsncars.org](http://www.kidsncars.org).

### US National Poisons Prevention Week

Each year, unintentional poisonings from medicines and household chemicals kill about 30 children and prompt more than one million calls to poison control centers in the US. The 40th National Poison Prevention Week in March aimed to help prevent those childhood poisonings by reminding people to check their homes now. The CPSC requires child resistant packaging for 28 categories of medicines and household chemicals and is considering such packaging for a group of chemicals known as hydrocarbons. “Child resistant packaging saves lives”, said CPSC Executive Director Pamela Gilbert. “For aspirin and oral prescription medicine, special packaging has saved the lives of over 900 children since the early 1970s”. According to Dr Alan Woolf, President of the American Association of Poison Control Centers, by treating poisoning in the home instead of the emergency room, poison centers save the United States \$350 million annually. The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act, which will support poison center programs throughout the US, will provide a stable source of federal funds for poison centers and make them more accessible to the entire nation.

### Safety commendation to McDonald’s

The CPSC announced in May that its Chairman had awarded the Chairman’s Commendation to McDonald’s Corp of Oak Brook, Illinois. The award commends McDonald’s for providing CPSC with state-of-the-art technology that aims to keep children safe. This technology, developed by RAM Consulting for McDonald’s toy safety program, gives CPSC technical staff additional tools to evaluate safety problems such as choking or suffocation hazards—the leading causes of deaths and injuries associated with children’s

products. The equipment includes a computerized “virtual child” and a life-like “breathing” mannequin designed to evaluate choking and suffocation hazards.

### Keep kids out of hot water

There are 350 000 burn and scald injuries in the home each year in the UK with children under 5 years being most at risk. The most common cause of these injuries to young children is hot drinks with hot bath water also being a key factor, especially among serious and fatal injuries. In March, the government department responsible for home safety, the Department of Trade and Industry, with the CAPT and British Burns Association launched an awareness campaign, offering advice on what to do if there was an accident. The Department of Trade and Industry has published a leaflet *Too hot to handle*, which can be accessed through its web site [www.dti.gov.uk/homesafetynetwork](http://www.dti.gov.uk/homesafetynetwork).

### Profile of Victorian injuries

The extra long March 2001 edition of *Hazard* compares the injury profiles of different geographic regions in Victoria, indicating broad priority areas for prevention. Additionally, this important dataset provides a reference baseline enabling evidence based assessments of the impact of intervention strategies in these regions. Recent issues of *Hazard* can be found at [www.general.monash.edu.au/muarc](http://www.general.monash.edu.au/muarc).

### Hook hazards

Environmental health officers in Bolton in the north of England have warned of the dangers of metal display hooks in shops, after a serious incident that almost blinded a 2 year old. The incident took place in November 1999 in a Matalan store, and led to the company being fined. Yet at least one branch of the company has still not remedied the situation completely—a Bolton branch was found by enforcement officers in May 2001 to have 40 hooks with their end caps missing, some at a height that could injure children.

*Contributors to these News and Notes include Anara Guard, Barry Pless, and Ian Scott; Michael Hayes has edited the contributions. Items for the March 2002 issue, 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)) by 1 December 2001.*

1 Bhowmilk R, Dolan M, Driscoll J, et al. *Targeting safety: how state attorneys general can act now to save lives*. Washington, DC: Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, Legal Action Project, 2001.