



March 23, 2022

Division of the Secretariat  
U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission  
Room 820  
4330 East West Highway  
Bethesda, MD 20814

**Comments of Consumer Reports to the  
Consumer Product Safety Commission on the  
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking:  
“Substantial Product Hazard List: Window Covering Cords”  
Docket No. CPSC-2021-0038**

Consumer Reports, the independent, non-profit member organization, welcomes the opportunity to present comments to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regarding the above-mentioned notice of proposed rulemaking, which aims to address the risk of strangulation to children eight years old and younger associated with hazardous cords on window coverings.<sup>1</sup> The CPSC’s proposed rule under section 15(j) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA)<sup>2</sup> would deem that one or more of the following readily observable characteristics of a window covering product present a substantial product hazard: (1) the presence of a hazardous operating cord on a stock window covering; (2) the presence of a hazardous inner cord on a stock or custom window covering; and (3) the absence of a manufacturer label on a stock or custom window covering. We commend the CPSC for proposing this rule, which is based on a robust body of evidence and would help protect children from the serious risk of injury or death.

Consumer Reports also welcomes the CPSC’s decision to propose concurrently a mandatory standard for hazardous operating cords on custom window coverings through its authorities provided by sections 7 and 9 of the CPSA.<sup>3</sup> The CPSC’s parallel rulemaking efforts to address hazardous cords found on both stock and custom window coverings are appropriate and necessary to provide clarity in the marketplace and to protect children from harm.

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<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1936, Consumer Reports (CR) is an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that works with consumers to create a fair and just marketplace. Known for its rigorous testing and ratings of products, CR advocates for laws and company practices that put consumers first. CR is dedicated to amplifying the voices of consumers to promote safety, digital rights, financial fairness, and sustainability. The organization surveys millions of Americans every year, reports extensively on the challenges and opportunities for today's consumers, and provides ad-free content and tools to 6 million members across the U.S.

<sup>2</sup> 15 U.S.C. 2064(j).

<sup>3</sup> CPSC, “CPSC Docket No. CPSC-2013-0028: Safety Standard for Operating Cords on Custom Window Coverings” (Jan. 7, 2022) (online at: [www.regulations.gov/docket/CPSC-2013-0028](http://www.regulations.gov/docket/CPSC-2013-0028)).

For nearly four decades, the CPSC has been warning parents and the public about the dangers associated with window covering cords. Despite the clear and persistent strangulation hazard, the voluntary standards development process for window covering cords has failed to remove hazardous cords on window coverings that put children at risk of injury or death. As a result, fatal and non-fatal incidents related to window covering cords continue to be reported, with at least eight children dying from strangulation by window covering cords every year. Between January 2009 and December 2020, the CPSC identified a minimum of 194 fatal and near-miss strangulations involving children eight years old or younger.

The CPSC’s incident data also includes information on how children have strangled on inner and operating cords found on all styles of stock and custom window coverings.<sup>4</sup> This data highlights how window covering cords that are accessible and are long enough to wrap around a child’s neck can result in serious injuries, including long-term or permanent vegetative states, or death. Such injuries or death can occur within minutes of a window covering cord wrapping around a child’s neck and applying pressure on the airway, vessels, or nerves in the neck.<sup>5</sup>

Since 1996, the voluntary standards process has yielded numerous iterations of a standard that have not adequately addressed the serious hazards associated with operating and inner cords. Frustrated with the industry delays and piecemeal attempts to address these hazards, Consumer Reports,<sup>6</sup> along with partner organizations, formally petitioned the CPSC in 2013—nearly nine years ago—to promulgate a strong mandatory standard to eliminate the strangulation hazards posed by accessible cords in all window coverings.<sup>7</sup>

In 2018, the voluntary standard, ANSI/WCMA A100.1-2018, the American National Standard for Safety of Corded Window Covering Products (ANSI/WCMA-2018), was updated to include the strongest safety provisions implemented in over three decades of the voluntary standard’s existence. These updates included performance requirements for operating cords for stock window coverings and inner cords for stock and custom window coverings would either remove hazardous accessible cords or render them inaccessible.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the CPSC has preliminarily determined that these requirements in ANSI/WCMA-2018 would “effectively eliminate or reduce” the risk of strangulation from operating and inner cords and could be used as the basis for proposed CPSC standards.

Since the 2018 updates to the voluntary standard, manufacturers have shown that substantial compliance is feasible, given the adoption of product designs to address the risk of strangulation associated with hazardous window covering cords. A CPSC-commissioned market analysis has concluded that compliance with ANSI/WCMA-2018 is prevalent in today’s window

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<sup>4</sup> 87 Fed. Reg. 898.

<sup>5</sup> 87 Fed. Reg. 897.

<sup>6</sup> Consumers Union is the former name of the advocacy division of Consumer Reports as well as the former name of the organization as a whole.

<sup>7</sup> Consumer Federation of America, “16 CFR § 1051 Petition for Rulemaking Eliminating Accessible Cords On Window Covering Products” (May 23, 2013) (online at: [consumerfed.org/pdfs/window-covering-petition-final.pdf](https://consumerfed.org/pdfs/window-covering-petition-final.pdf)).

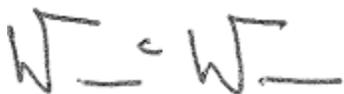
<sup>8</sup> American National Standards Institute, “American National Standard For Safety Of Corded Window Covering Products” (Jan. 8, 2018) (online at: [webstore.ansi.org/standards/wcma/ansiwcm1002018?gclid=CjwKCAiAyPyQBhB6EiwAFUuaklXmrRPI1WnjUmqZ\\_sGB2zGTCf94Ykj9U4R4pKcWpPB4eOYuYcbehoCW8kQAvD\\_BwE](https://webstore.ansi.org/standards/wcma/ansiwcm1002018?gclid=CjwKCAiAyPyQBhB6EiwAFUuaklXmrRPI1WnjUmqZ_sGB2zGTCf94Ykj9U4R4pKcWpPB4eOYuYcbehoCW8kQAvD_BwE)).

coverings industry, with manufacturers offering cordless models for most stock window covering categories as well as for some custom window covering categories.<sup>9</sup> This study also concluded that the voluntary standard “has caused U.S. window covering manufacturers to design and offer cordless lift operations for most window covering categories.”<sup>10</sup>

Given the severity of the injuries, the hazards that accessible window covering cords present, the continued industry delays in fully addressing the hazards, and the fulfillment of statutory requirements under 15 U.S.C. 2064(j)(1), the CPSC is well within its discretion—and is correct—to add specified window coverings to its substantial product hazard list. Inadequate action by industry to address the strangulation hazards associated with window covering cords has resulted in continued reports of injury and death. The CPSC’s proposed rule, in combination with its section 7 and 9 rulemaking, is a necessary step to finally remove hazardous window covering cords from all units in the consumer marketplace and prevent future serious incidents. These proposals together would effectively implement a strong standard across the market and provide the CPSC with a greater ability to keep hazardous corded window coverings off the market through enforcement actions.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We look forward to continuing to work with the CPSC and all stakeholders to eliminate the strangulation hazard associated with corded window coverings.

Respectfully submitted,



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Policy Counsel

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<sup>9</sup> CPSC, “D+R International Market Research Final Report” (Feb. 2021) (online at: [www.regulations.gov/document/CPSC-2013-0028-1579](http://www.regulations.gov/document/CPSC-2013-0028-1579)), p. 28; *See also* 87 Fed. Reg. 909.

<sup>10</sup> CPSC, “D+R International Market Research Final Report” (Feb. 2021) (online at: [www.regulations.gov/document/CPSC-2013-0028-1579](http://www.regulations.gov/document/CPSC-2013-0028-1579)), p. 28.