

# Reporting Product-Related Injuries and Deaths to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

Marietta Robinson  
Commissioner of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission



Reporting product-related injuries and deaths to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) through [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov) is critically important to helping prevent future injuries. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products — such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals — has contributed substantially to the decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 40 years.

Our data concerning product-related medical incidents, injuries, and deaths drive everything we do to carry out our public health mission. Other federal agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, use our data in furtherance of their public health and safety missions as well. The CPSC collects two types of data: anecdotal and statistical.

## Anecdotal Data

The CPSC obtains its anecdotal data through several sources, but the most important is [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov). The website was authorized by Congress in 2008, went live in 2011, and over the past three years has become increasingly easy to use. To date we have received approximately 20,000 reports of product-related harm or risk.

Conspicuous by their virtual absence in reporting product-related harm to our website are the medical and public health communities. We are trying to correct that deficiency by informing these communities of our reporting website and the critical need for such reports, knowing that we share the goal of preventing unnecessary injuries and deaths.

**Health care professionals regularly see injuries associated with consumer products and are thus in a unique position to observe and report such safety concerns.** For example, emergency medical professionals are the first to know what toys given each Christmas are causing injuries when those toys are defective, used incorrectly, or overused. While ED personnel may identify a trend of injuries in the weeks following Christmas, the CPSC has to wait much longer for this type of information — unless the injuries are reported directly to us. **That is why I urge everyone in the health care community to report (or at the minimum urge their patients to report) consumer product-related injuries to the CPSC using [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov).** The CPSC needs to receive the best and most reliable data as quickly as possible in order to assess consumer product-related trends and detect emerging hazards as soon as possible.

There is a benefit to the medical community as well. As long as the reports contain certain minimum information required by law and the submitter consents, the reports are publicly searchable approximately fifteen business days after the report is submitted. You may use the database to search for similar injuries, incidents, and deaths and to identify trends in your particular practice or geographic area.

## Statistical Data — National Electronic Injury Surveillance System

As mentioned above, the CPSC receives statistical data as well, through its forty year-old National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (“NEISS”). The NEISS is comprised of approximately 100 hospital emergency departments specifically selected to allow statistical extrapolation of consumer product-related injuries to the national level. The NEISS collects approximately 400,000 product-related injury reports annually, that represent an estimate of over 14 million product-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments each year. The NEISS data are also publicly available and searchable on the CPSC's website at [www.cpsc.gov/en/Research--Statistics/NEISS-Injury-Data](http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Research--Statistics/NEISS-Injury-Data). Medical professionals and researchers use this database frequently.

Finally, thank you for your time, energy, and dedication as emergency physicians. Your passion to heal the public and keep us safe is admirable and inspirational.

## Reporting Data is Easy!

Go to [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov) and fill in the electronic form online. The electronic form will require you to ask two additional questions of your patients about the type of product involved and takes only a few minutes to complete. You will be given the opportunity to register with CPSC when you begin. If you register, you will be able to save your electronic form so you may come back and complete it any time within the next 30 days.

*Marietta Robinson is a Commissioner at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The thoughts and beliefs articulated in the article are entirely her own and in no way reflect the positions, opinions or statements of the CPSC or its staff. If you have any ideas, thoughts or questions about this topic, she may be reached at [MRobinson@cpsc.gov](mailto:MRobinson@cpsc.gov).*

*Also note that the CPSC is a public health authority as explained in 45 CFR 164.512(b)(1)(i). The disclosure of protected health information to a public health authority is a permitted disclosure under the regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information at 45 CFR 164.502(a)(1)(vi) in connection with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. ■*