



**UNITED STATES
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20207**

Memorandum

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TO : Bill King, Director
Division of Electrical Engineering
Directorate for Engineering

THROUGH: Mary Ann Danello, Ph.D., Associate Executive Director
Directorate for Epidemiology and Health Sciences

Sue Ahmed, Ph.D., Director
Division of Hazard Analysis

FROM : Kimberly Ault, Ph.D.
Division of Hazard Analysis

SUBJECT : 1996 Electrocutions Associated with the Use of Consumer Products

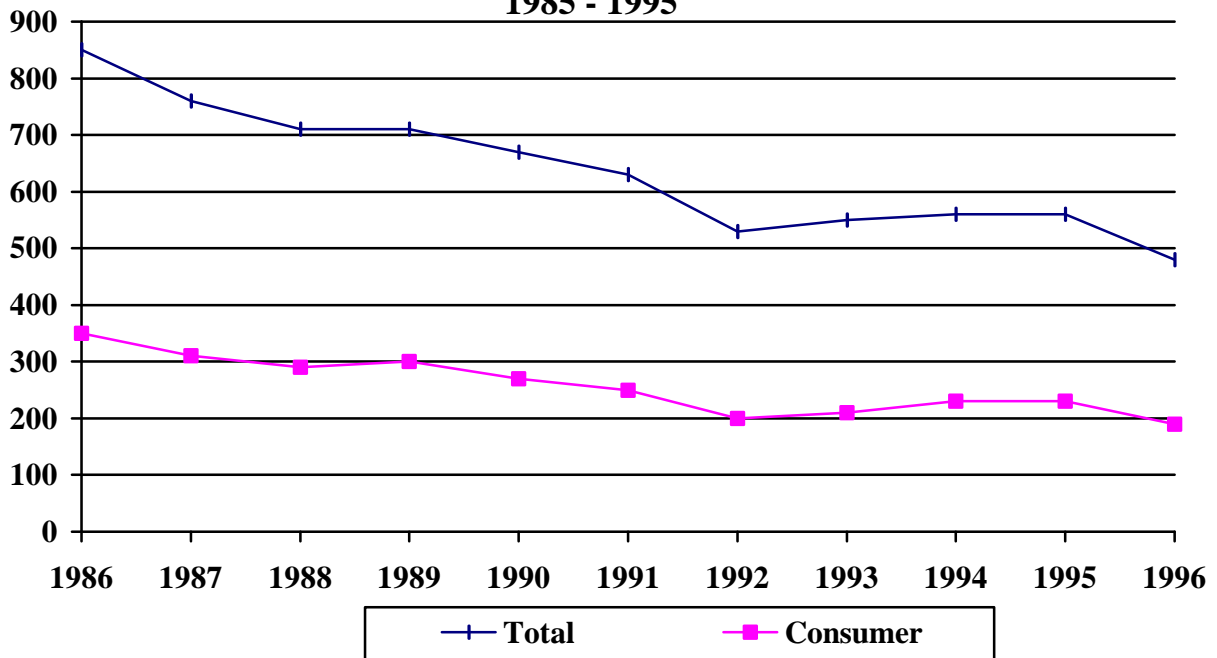
According to data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), total electrocutions in the U.S. have decreased from 850 deaths in 1986 to 480 in 1996 (the most recent year for which data are available), a reduction of 44 percent. Table 1 shows that during this period, the estimated electrocutions related to consumer products decreased from 350 to 190, a reduction of 46 percent. A regression analysis of the total and consumer product-related electrocutions from 1986 to 1996 showed a significant downward trend in both total electrocution deaths and consumer product-related electrocution deaths for this period (see Figure 1). Also, the product-related electrocution death rate has declined significantly during the same period. In 1986, estimated consumer product-related electrocutions occurred at a rate of 1.46 per million U.S. population. In 1996, that rate was 0.72 per million, a reduction of 51 percent.

Table 2 shows that installed home wiring was the most frequently reported product (22%) involved in electrocutions for 1996. Small appliances including fans, microwaves, radios, televisions, and stereos was the second most frequently reported group of products (17%) involved in electrocutions. Large appliances such as air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, pumps, and generators was the third most frequently reported group of products (15%) involved in electrocutions. Antennas that came in contact with power lines accounted for 10 percent of the deaths; power tools, such as drills and saws, accounted for 8 percent of electrocutions; lighting equipment, mainly lamps and light fixtures, accounted for 6 percent; ladders that came in contact with overhead power lines accounted for 6 percent; and garden and farm equipment accounted for 4 percent of the electrocutions. Other products including pipes, poles, fences, boat hoists, and amusement rides accounted for the remaining 13 percent of the deaths.

Table 1
Electrocutions Related to Consumer Products
and Death Rates Based on U.S. Population, 1986-1996

Year	U.S. Total Electrocutions	Consumer Product Related Electrocutions		Death Rate per Million U.S. Population
		Number	Percent of Total	
1986	850	350	41%	1.46
1987	760	310	41%	1.28
1988	710	290	41%	1.19
1989	710	300	42%	1.22
1990	670	270	40%	1.08
1991	630	250	40%	0.99
1992	530	200	38%	0.78
1993	550	210	38%	0.81
1994	560	230	41%	0.88
1995	560	230	41%	0.88
1996	480	190	40%	0.72

Figure 1
Total Electrocutions and
Electrocutions Associated with Consumer Products
1985 - 1995



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Consumer Product Safety Commission / EHHA.

Table 2
Electrocutions Involving Consumer Products, 1996

Type of Consumer Product	Estimate	Percent
Total Number of Deaths	190	100%
Installed Household Wiring	41	22%
Small Appliances	33	17%
Microwaves	12	
Hair, Hygiene Equipment	5	
Extension Cords	4	
Fans	4	
Radios, Televisions, Stereos	4	
Other	5	
Large Appliances	28	15%
Air Conditioners	14	
Pumps / Generators	7	
Electric Furnaces / Water Heaters	5	
Refrigerators/Freezers	1	
Clothes Dryers	1	
Antennas	19	10%
Power Tools	16	8%
Power Drills	7	
Welding Equipment	5	
Power Saws	1	
Other	2	
Lighting Equipment	11	6%
Lamps, Light Fixtures	10	
Work Lights	1	
Ladders	11	6%
Garden/Farm Equipment	7	4%
Other Products	25	13%
Pipes, Poles, Fences	19	
Boat Hoists/Amusement Rides	1	
Other	5	

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission / EHHA

Note: The number of electrocutions associated with each consumer product is an adjusted count. The methodology section describes the estimation process in more detail. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Methodology

All death certificates filed in the U.S. are compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and are available annually as public use mortality data files. The multiple cause mortality data files contain demographic and geographic information as well as the International Classification of Diseases codes for the underlying cause of death and up to 20 contributing conditions. The data are compiled in accordance with the World Health Organization instructions, which request that member nations classify causes of death by the current Manual of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries, and Causes of Death. The International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision was implemented in 1979 and was in effect between 1986 and 1996, the years for which data are presented in this report.

The following methodology was used to determine electrocutions associated with the use of consumer products. The first step in the estimation process is searching the NCHS data for the following external cause of death codes (Ecodes):

- 925.0 Accident caused by electric current: Domestic wiring and appliances
- 925.1 Accident caused by electric current: Electric power generating plants, distribution, stations, transmission lines
- 925.2 Accident caused by electric current: Industrial wiring, appliances and electrical machinery,
- 925.8 Accident caused by electric current: Other
- 925.9 Accident caused by electric current: Unspecified

To estimate the total number of consumer product-related electrocutions annually from the NCHS file, electrocution deaths which occurred in homes, sport/recreational areas, and farms were summed for the Ecodes above. Assuming that unspecified electrocutions followed the same distribution as known electrocutions, a relative proportion of the unspecified electrocutions was added to the known electrocution counts for each of the Ecodes. The adjusted counts were summed to produce the estimated total number of electrocutions associated with consumer products which occurred in homes, sport/recreational areas, and farms.

The next step in the estimation procedure was to examine CPSC product-related databases, since the NCHS data does not provide a distribution of the deaths by product. CPSC collects copies of death certificates involving electrocutions and other deaths from individual states. The death certificates that include enough information to identify a related consumer product are coded and maintained in the Death Certificate database (DCRT). Also, CPSC maintains the Injury or Potential Injury Incident database (IPII) which contains data from sources such as letters, telephone calls, newspaper clippings, and reports from consumers, coroners, medical examiners, and fire and police departments. These reports describe deaths, injuries, and "near miss" incidents involving consumer products.

The Death Certificate File (DCRT) and the Injury or Potential Injury Incident File (IPII) were searched for incidents involving electrocutions and then tabulated by specific consumer product. The DCRT file and the IPII file were compared by date of death, state, sex, age, and location of death to determine if there were duplicate reports of the same death. The counts from the two databases were summed to provide the total number of CPSC-collected electrocutions. To estimate the number of electrocutions associated with each product, the percentage of the CPSC database total for each product category was applied to the total number of estimated consumer product-related electrocutions obtained from the NCHS data. These estimates are shown in Table 2.

bcc: Danello, Mary Ann
Ahmed, Sue
Ault, Kim
Gillum, Brenda
Scheers, NJ
EHHA Chron