

Joint Action on Non Child-resistant Lighters and Novelty Lighters Ends

Since September 2007 market surveillance authorities in 13 European Member States have been busy running a joint action on non child-resistant lighters and novelty lighters with the endeavour of enforcing the safety requirements for lighters. More than 600 lighter models have been removed from the European market since the beginning of the joint action. PROSAFE now wants to follow-up the action to ensure that lighters comply with the safety requirements.

In September 2007 PROSAFE together with 13 Member States and with financial support from the European Commission started a joint action on non child-resistant lighters and novelty lighters. The background was that lighters might be dangerous products and dangerous lighters are known to have caused several house fires and fatal injuries to the consumers for a number of years. The aim of the joint action was to increase the safety for the European consumer by ensuring that only safe lighters are placed on the EU market.

The joint action ends in December 2009. Today the action organises a half-day workshop to present the results and findings. Even though the action has not yet been completed, reports from the participating Member States show that the level of activity has been very high in the past 2 years:

- Between 2,500 and 3,000 inspections have been carried out at importers, wholesalers and retailers.
- Customs have inspected almost 8,000 consignments ranging from small packages to entire containers upon arrival to Europe.
- The participants have checked almost 3,500 lighter models.
- Measures have been taken against more than 600 lighter models because they were found to be dangerous or because the economic operator did not possess the required technical documentation.
- Almost 300 models of novelty lighters have been taken off the European market.
- The Member States have submitted more than 55 RAPEX notifications on lighters that present the most serious risk to the consumer in 2008 and 2009.

The reports from the Member States also indicate that novelty lighters constitute a decreasing share of their markets. But the results also show that a large share of the lighter models on the European market do not comply with the legal requirements because they have smaller or more severe faults. Therefore PROSAFE and the participants involved have proposed to follow up the first action in a new joint action. The follow-up action is expected start in January 2010.



Advice to consumers

As a consumer you are advised to follow the 8 rules for the safe use of lighters listed below:

8 rules for safe operation of lighters

1. Do not buy lighters without any evidence of child safety or lighters with a design that appeals to children.
2. Do not leave lighters within easy reach of children. Child-resistance does not mean child-proof.
3. Do not leave lighters on hot surfaces. Heat might change the lighters properties and cause fires.
4. Only use lighters for their intended purposes. Misuse may be dangerous.
5. Dispose of defective lighters as soon as you discover any disruption or leakage.
6. Do not attempt to repair a lighter yourself. Always use the appointed service centre.
7. Only use the appropriate fuel when refilling your lighter. Guidance is found in the instructions for use.
8. Never attempt to refill lighters that are not refillable.

Take care of the environment. Dispose of empty lighters properly.

Background

The joint action is coordinated by PROSAFE, “The Product Safety Enforcement Forum of Europe”. It is a non-profit organisation bringing together market surveillance officers from all over Europe and across the world.

According to the General Product Safety Directive any product that is placed on the European market must be safe. This is an obligation of the producers, importers and retailers. Lighters are presumed to be safe if they are constructed and produced so that they meet the requirements of two standards:

- EN ISO 9994 that sets down safety requirements for properties like flame height, resistance to high temperatures, extinction time, maximum filling, etc.
- EN 13869 that sets down requirements for the child-resistance.

The RAPEX reports on those lighters presenting the most serious risk to the consumer can be found on the European Commission’s website:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/dyna/rapex/rapex_archives_en.cfm

PROSAFE compiles inventories of lighter designs that are commonly recognised by market surveillance authorities to be novelty lighters and designs that are recognised not to be novelty lighters. They can be found on the PROSAFE webex workspace:

<http://prosafe.project.webexworkspace.com/r.asp?a=12&id=17619>

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