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Prevent Serious Burn Injuries

SUPPORT H.R. 806, THE PORTABLE FUEL CONTAINER SAFETY ACT OF 2019

Summary

H.R. 806, the Portable Fuel Container Safety Act of 2019, introduced by Reps. Mike Thompson (D-CA) and David Joyce (R-OH), would direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to issue a final rule establishing clearly defined standards for installing flame arrestors on portable fuel containers.

Problem

Portable fuel containers can pose a serious risk to consumers. Under specific chemical conditions, something known as a flashback explosion can occur. During a flashback explosion, gas vapor from a fuel container escapes and comes in contact with a spark or flame causing an ignition that flashes back into the container. This can lead to a flame explosion with potentially catastrophic results.

Fortunately, installing a simple device called a flame arrestor can prevent the estimated 18,500 annual injuries (incident source: CPSC's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System Database). A flame arrestor is a small piece of mesh or perforated disk designed to disrupt flame. It costs about \$0.02-\$0.05 per fuel container.

Standards for flame arrestors are already well developed. Flame arrestors are currently included in products such as metal "safety" gas cans, fuel tanks, and charcoal lighter fluid. They are required in workplace fuel containers but are not required in consumer portable fuel containers.

Current State of Play

In 2007, the CPSC formed a subcommittee to address the issue of burn injuries resulting from portable fuel container use. In 2011, the CPSC initiated a voluntary product recall for portable fuel containers not having a flame arrestor. This recall was unsuccessful, leaving approximately 100 million portable fuel containers without flame arrestors being sold to thousands of unsuspecting consumers and resulting in thousands of preventable injuries each year.

Solution

H.R. 806 would provide up to 18 months for CPSC to adopt a voluntary standard regarding flame arrestors on portable fuel containers. The voluntary standard may be developed by ASTM International, the current international standards organization that creates technical standards for a wide range of products, materials, and services. If no voluntary standard is created, CPSC would be required to issue a final rule on flame arrestors no later than 30 months after the bill's enactment. H.R. 806 would allow any voluntary standard adopted by CPSC to be enforced as a consumer product safety rule. The bill would also allow a standard development organization to make revisions to any volunteer standard, which would be subject to the approval of CPSC.

Furthermore, H.R. 806 would require CPSC to create a campaign to educate consumers about the dangers associated with using portable fuel containers near an open flame or any other source of ignition. It would also require the commission to submit to Congress a summary of actions taken during the campaign within two years of the bill's enactment.