Consumer Federation of America · Consumers Union · Kids In Danger

One year Anniversary of CPSC Consumer Safety Information Database's First Postings

Database is working exactly as intended: educating consumers and helping CPSC to be more effective

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Consumer Federation of America (CFA), Kids In Danger (KID) and Consumers Union (CU) mark the one year anniversary of the posting of consumer reports on the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) consumer database, SaferProducts.gov, that allows people to share and access safety information about the products they own and consider buying. To mark the first year anniversary, CFA and KID conducted an analysis of the reports published in the database thru January 2012.

These groups championed the creation of the database and have hailed it as an important tool to educate consumers about product safety hazards and improve the CPSC's ability to identify and act on problems in the marketplace. The database is online at www.SaferProducts.gov.

In the CFA/KID analysis of the first 10 months of reports, it is clear that the database is working as intended – giving consumers both a place to report and review reports. Of the 6,080 reports, almost all were submitted by consumers.

"Consumers make up the vast majority of the reporters to the database, which was the hoped for and expected outcome. But while consumers make up 97% of the reporters to the database, medical professionals made up only .46%; medical examiners and coroners made up only .2%; and other public safety entities made up 1%," stated Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety and Senior Counsel at Consumer Federation of America. "More should be done to reach out to medical experts and others to ensure that they are aware of the database."

The reports cover a vast array of products from kitchen appliances to cribs to shoes to lighting products. The largest group of reports are about kitchen products (37%), especially appliances (33%). Concern for children's safety is evident as well with 15% of the reports about children's products including toys and nursery items.

Weintraub continued, "Our analysis of the database shows that consumers and the CPSC now have access to useful information about many types of consumer products – information that was not available to the public before. Consumers are no longer completely left in the dark about product safety and have access to lifesaving information."

"CFA and KID's analysis illustrates that the information provided to the database is overwhelmingly specific," said Nancy Cowles, executive director of Kids In Danger, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting children from unsafe products. "Eighty-four percent of all reports included a serial number or model name or number."

Concerns had been raised previously about the lack of information in the reports, but the additional information in most reports makes it possible to accurately identify the product involved. Manufacturers exercised their right to post additional comments on 53% of reports. In addition, most reports (70%) involved products purchased in the last five years, not older products.

Cowles stated, "Parents and caregivers are using this tool to let others know about potential hazards and to review the products they use or plan to use with their children. In our annual research on children's product recalls, we have seen reports on recalled products showing up on SaferProducts.gov both before and after recall."

While incidents affecting consumers of all ages were reported, those involving people aged 41-50 were most frequent, making up 17.9% of reports.

Ami Gadhia, Senior Product Safety Counsel for Consumers Union, said, "The CPSC database is an extraordinarily valuable resource for consumers. Consumer Reports has found important information in the database about everything from appliance fires to strollers to shattered bakeware. Last year, 82 percent of consumers told us in a national survey that they were interested in a product database like this to report and search for problems. Clearly, this database makes a real difference in helping consumers protect themselves and their families."

"In its first year, SaferProducts.gov has proven that it is a useful tool, concluded Weintraub. "Now, CPSC can continue their efforts to increase users and streamline the process to make it an even more effective for manufacturers, consumers, researchers and CPSC itself."

The database is required under the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) approved by Congress and signed by President Bush in 2008. The database went live on March 11, 2011 and posted the first reports on April 2, 2011. The database has been under attack by some lawmakers who have pushed to defund it and by a lawsuit filed by an anonymous company.

While the CPSC has historically collected consumer complaints, most were hidden from the public unless a recall was announced and then the incidents were usually only announced in the aggregate. Provisions in the Consumer Product Safety Act limited CPSC's ability to alert consumers without the company's approval. While reports of harm or potential harm from manufacturers or retailers about unsafe products are still kept in the dark, SaferProducts.gov has already shed light on the safety of products in the marketplace by publishing consumer experiences.

Consumer Federation of America (www.consumerfed.org); Consumers Union (www.consumersunion.org);
Kids In Danger (www.kidsindanger.org)

Report Highlights

CFA and KID conducted an analysis of the reports published in the database thru January 2012.

- There were 6080 reports included in the data base.

- Almost all reports, 97%, were submitted by consumers.
    - Medical professionals made up only .46%; medical examiners and coroners made up only .2%; and other public safety entities made up 1%.

- The reports cover a vast array of products from kitchen appliances to cribs to shoes to lighting products.
    - The largest group of reports are about kitchen products (37%), especially appliances (33%).
    - Concern for children's safety is evident as well with 15% of the reports about children's products including toys and nursery items.

- The information provided to the database is overwhelmingly specific with 84% of all reports including a serial number or model name or number.

- Manufacturers exercised their right to post additional comments on 53% of reports.

- Most reports (70%) involved newer products, products purchased in the last five years, not older products.

- People aged 41-50 were the most frequent age of the victim described in the report making up 17.9% of reports.

SaferProducts.gov Research

For this research, KID and CFA[1] downloaded 10 months of reports from the database: from April 2, 2011 through January 31, 2012. Data was cleaned for spelling and entry errors.
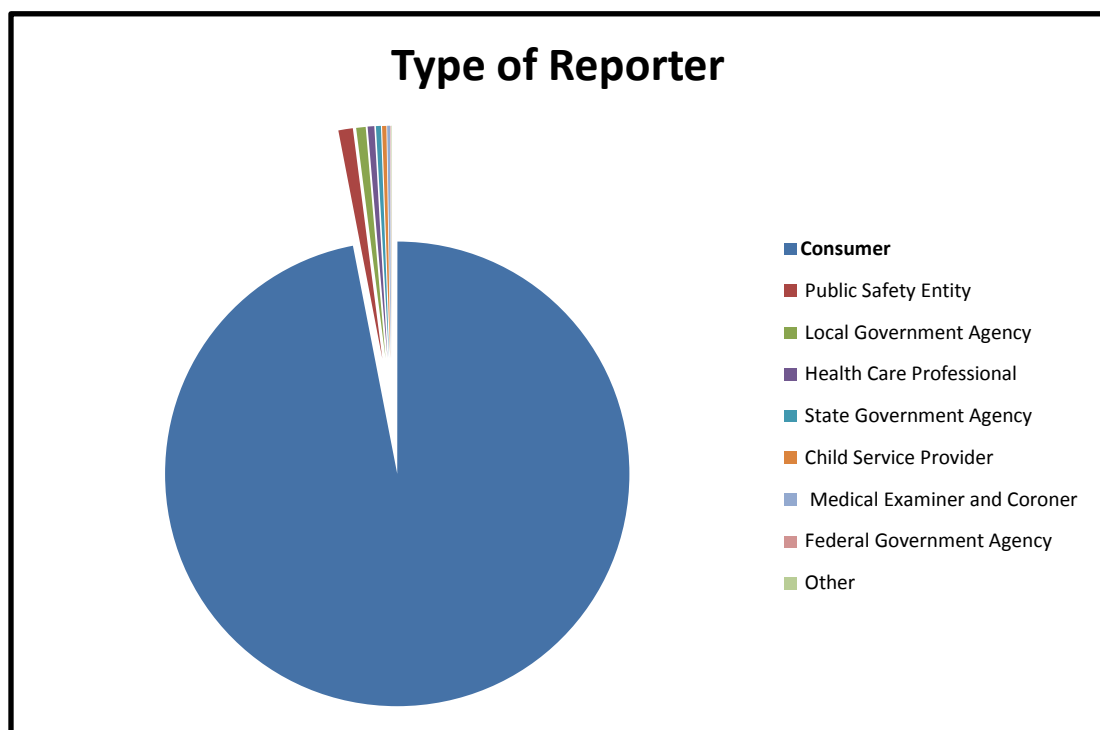
Total Number of Reports: 6,080

Responses from Companies: 3,209

Provided Serial Number or Model Name/Number: 5089 (83.70%)

Submitter Breakdown:

- Consumer: 5895 (96.96%)
- Public Safety Entity: 62 (1.02%)
- Local Government Agency: 40 (0.66%)
- Health Care Professional: 28 (0.46%)
- State Government Agency: 21 (0.35%)
- Child Service Provider: 18 (0.30%)
- Medical Examiner and Coroner: 12 (0.20%)
- Federal Government Agency: 2 (0.03%)
- Other: 2 (0.03%)

Type of Reporter

- ■ **Consumer**
- ■ Public Safety Entity
- ■ Local Government Agency
- ■ Health Care Professional
- ■ State Government Agency
- ■ Child Service Provider
- ■ Medical Examiner and Coroner
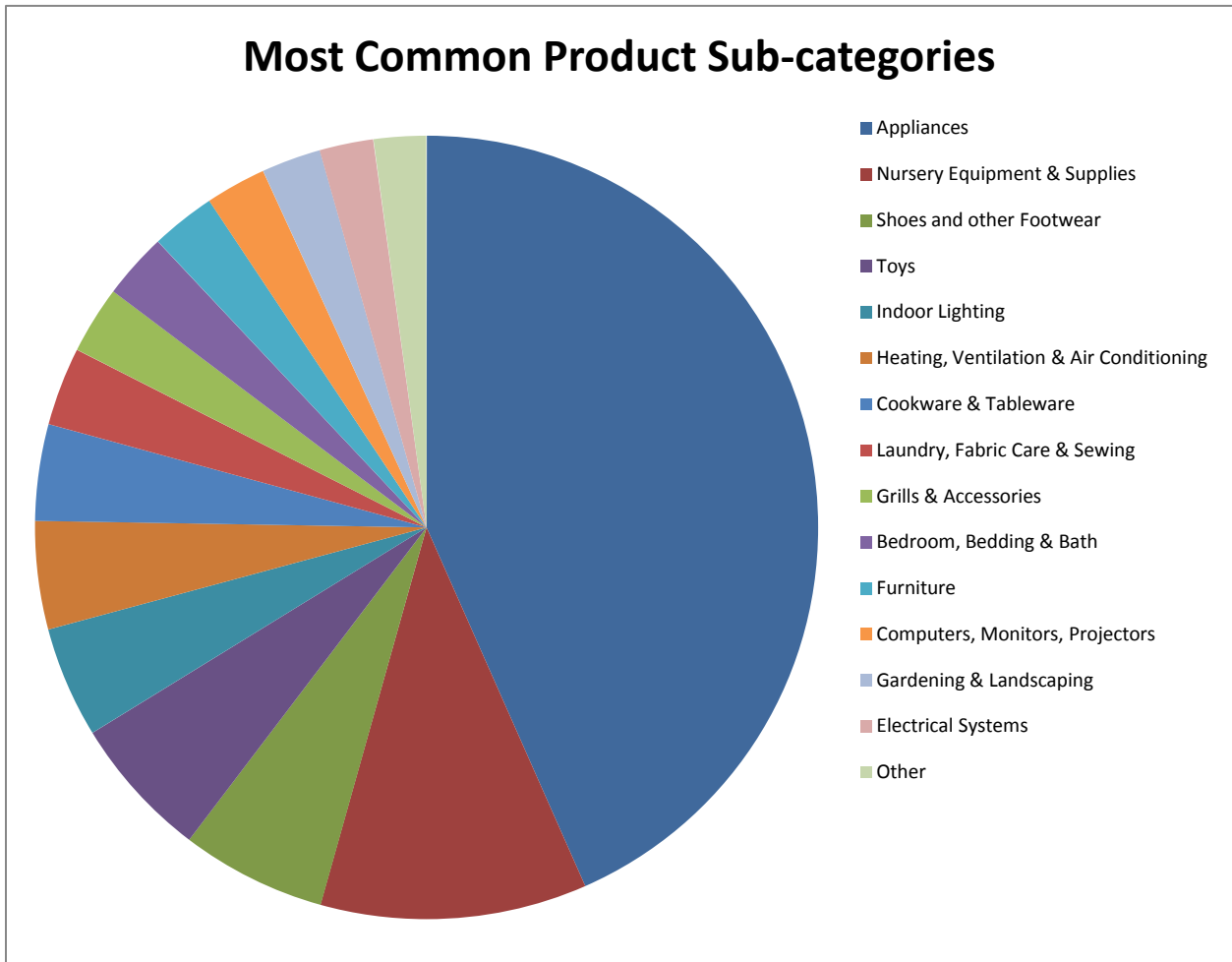- ■ Federal Government Agency
- ■ Other

Product Category Breakdown:

- Kitchen: 2222 (36.56%)
- Home Maintenance & Structures: 824 (13.56%)
- Furniture, Furnishings, & Decor: 526 (8.65%)
- Baby: 505 (8.31%)
- Toys and Children: 393 (6.47%)
- Yard and Garden: 378 (6.22%)
- Clothing and Accessories: 338 (5.56%)
- Electronics: 320 (5.26%)
- Sports and Recreation: 274 (4.51%)
- Personal Care: 94 (1.55%)
- Fuel, Lighters, & Fireworks: 70 (1.15%)
- Hobby: 45 (0.74%)
- Containers and Packaging: 41 (0.67%)
- Drywall: 40 (0.66%)
- Products at Public Facilities: 8 (0.13%)

Product Categories

- Baby
- Clothing and Accessories
- Containers & Packaging
- Drywall
- Electronics
- Fuel, Lighters and Fireworks
- Furniture, Furnishings & Decorations
- Hobby
- Home Maintenance and Structures
- **Kitchen**
- Personal Care
- Products at Public Facilities
- Sports and Recreation
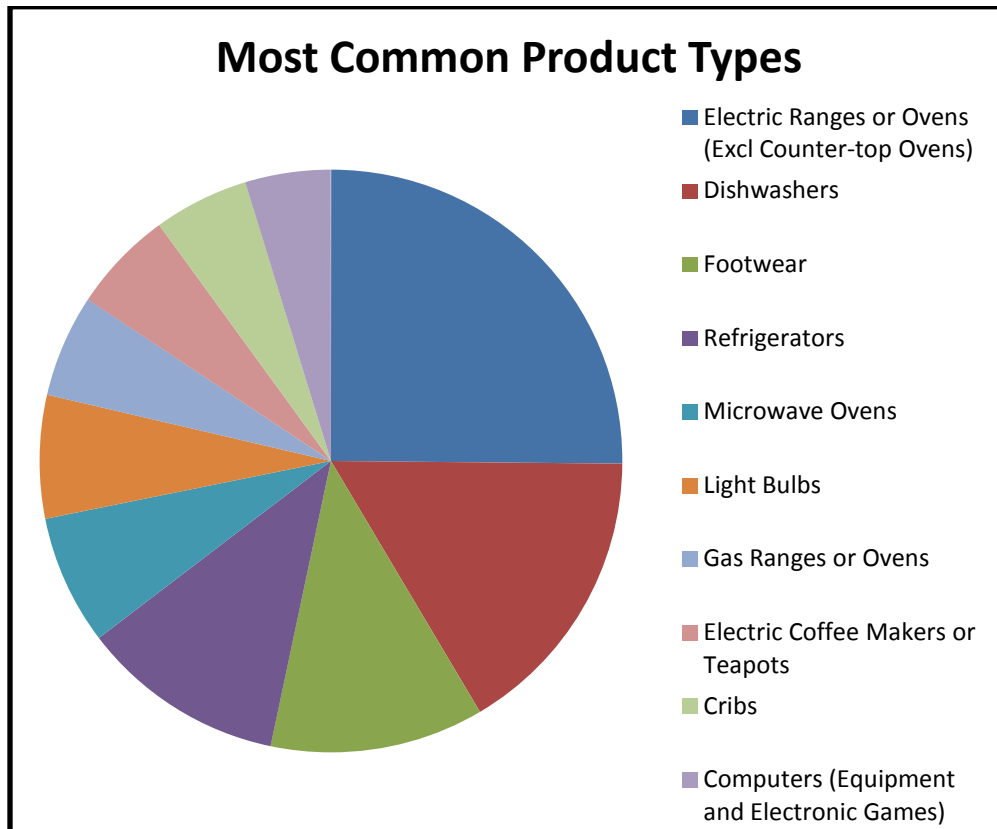- Toys & Children
- Yard & Garden
- (blank)

Top 15 Most Common Subcategories:

- Appliances: 1994 (32.81% of all subcategories)
- Nursery Equipment & Supplies: 505 (8.31%)
- Shoes & other Footwear: 275 (4.52%)
- Toys: 271 (4.46%)
- Indoor Lighting: 210 (3.46%)
- Heating, Ventilation & Air Cond: 205 (3.37%)
- Cookware & Tableware: 183 (3.01%)
- Laundry, Fabric Care & Sewing: 149 (2.45%)
- Grills & Accessories: 128 (2.11%)
- Bedroom, Bedding & Bath: 125 (2.06%)
- Furniture: 122 (2.01%)
- Computers, Monitors, Projectors: 115 (1.89%)
- Gardening & Landscaping: 113 (1.86%)
- Electrical Systems: 102 (1.68%)
- Other: 100 (1.65%)

Most Common Product Sub-categories

- Appliances
- Nursery Equipment & Supplies
- Shoes and other Footwear
- Toys
- Indoor Lighting
- Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning
- Cookware & Tableware
- Laundry, Fabric Care & Sewing
- Grills & Accessories
- Bedroom, Bedding & Bath
- Furniture
- Computers, Monitors, Projectors
- Gardening & Landscaping
- Electrical Systems
- Other

Top 10 Most Common Product Types:

- Electric Ranges or Ovens (Excl Counter-top Ovens): 583 (9.59% of all product types)
- Dishwashers: 378 (6.22%)
- Footwear: 275: (4.52%)
- Refrigerators: 262 (4.31%)
- Microwave Ovens: 167 (2.75%)
- Light Bulbs: 158 (2.60%)
- Gas Ranges or Ovens: 132 (2.17%)
- Electric Coffee Makers or Teapots: 131 (2.16%)
- Cribs: 122 (2.01%)
- Computers (Equipment and Electronic Games): 110 (1.81%)

Most Common Product Types

Legend:
- Electric Ranges or Ovens (Excl Counter-top Ovens)
- Dishwashers
- Footwear
- Refrigerators
- Microwave Ovens
- Light Bulbs
- Gas Ranges or Ovens
- Electric Coffee Makers or Teapots
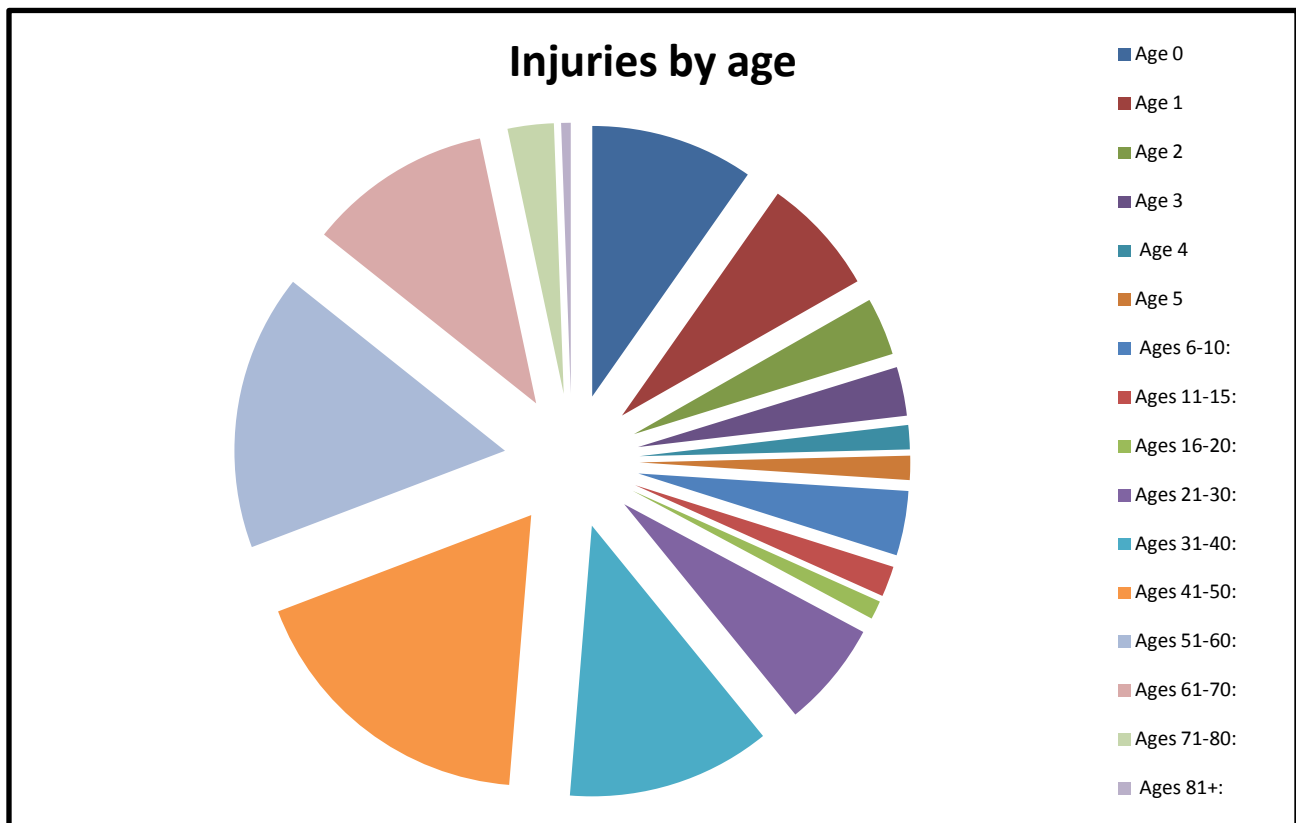- Cribs
- Computers (Equipment and Electronic Games)

Top 5 Most Reported Manufacturers

- Sears Holdings Management Corporation: 822 (13.52% of total manufacturers)
- WHIRLPOOL CORPORATION: 501 (8.24%)
- ELECTROLUX/WHITE CONSOLIDATED: 225 (3.70%)
- GE Appliances & Lighting: 216 (3.55%)
- Skechers USA, Inc: 172 (2.83%)

Injuries by Age (out of 3511):

- Age 0: 342 (9.74%)
- Age 1: 246 (7.01%)
- Age 2: 122 (3.47%)
- Age 3: 103 (2.93%)
- Age 4: 51 (1.45%)
- Age 5: 50 (1.42%)
- Ages 6-10: 135 (3.85%)
- Ages 11-15: 64 (1.82%)

- Ages 16-20: 39 (1.11%)
- Ages 21-30: 222 (6.32%)
- Ages 31-40: 427 (12.16%)
- **Ages 41-50: 629 (17.92%)**
- Ages 51-60: 579 (16.49%)
- Ages 61-70: 385 (10.97%)
- Ages 71-80: 97 (2.76%)
- Ages 81+: 20 (0.57%)

Injuries by age

Legend: Age 0, Age 1, Age 2, Age 3, Age 4, Age 5, Ages 6-10:, Ages 11-15:, Ages 16-20:, Ages 21-30:, Ages 31-40:, Ages 41-50:, Ages 51-60:, Ages 61-70:, Ages 71-80:, Ages 81+:

Purchase Date Breakdown (Out of 4810 Dates Provided):

- Before 1990: 6 (0.13%)
- 1990-2000: 51 (1.06%)
- 2000-2004: 352 (7.32%)
- 2004-2008: 1056 (21.95%)
- 2008- Feb 2012: 3345 (69.54%)

Product Purchase Date

Before 1990	1990-2000	2000-2004	2004-2008	2008- Feb 2012
6	51	352	1056	3345