


DRAFT #3	Talking Points – Corded Window Products and CPSC	10/6/15 NOT APPROVED FOR RELEASE
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BACKGROUND:

Elliot Kaye, Chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), is urging Lowe’s and other retailers to eliminate the sale of window products with cords that can form a hazardous loop due to the risk of deaths or injury to children who could strangle after becoming entangled in the cords. Lowe’s is one of a number of retailers engaging in ongoing dialogue with the CPSC staff about the Chairman’s concerns. The company also is named in at least three lawsuits filed by families who claim their children were injured or died as a result of accessible cord window coverings.

Potential news media attention to the issue could occur in October, National Window Covering Safety Month, sponsored by the CPSC and the Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC). During this time, the CPSC Chairman is expected to leverage news media to call attention to the deaths of children who’ve strangled after becoming entangled in corded window products.

On September 2, 2015, Lowe’s PR was contacted by Cindy Galli, a producer for ABC News investigative reporter Brian Ross. She indicated she is researching child deaths from window blinds and said plans were for a broadcast to air on Good Morning America and/or World News Tonight. In a follow up conversation on September 21, 2015, she said the large amount of information they have gathered may result in a larger piece on 20/20. She gave no firm deadline, but suggested the story will likely air in October, perhaps mid-month.

	BRIAN ROSS, ABC NEWS
	<p>Brian Ross is an investigative journalist who serves as Chief Investigative Correspondent for ABC News. He reports for “World News Tonight with David Muir”, “Nightline”, “Good Morning America”, “20/20”, and ABC News Radio. His investigative reports often cover government corruption and alleged corporate wrongdoing. From 1974 until 1994, Ross was a correspondent for NBC News.</p> <p>His notable and award winning news reports are numerous. Those involving retailers/businesses are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an award-winning two-part report for “Dateline NBC” in 1992, Ross exposed Wal-Mart’s use of child labor in overseas sweatshops to provide clothing for their “Buy American” campaign. • Ross received the 2007 Edward R. Murrow Award for investigative reporting for a two-part “20/20” undercover investigation into retail pharmacy errors, focusing on large drugstore chains, including CVS and Walgreens. • Ross’s investigation, “Taking on Toyota”, prompted one of the largest automobile recalls in history, was awarded the Edward R. Murrow Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association in 2011. • Ross's investigation “Tragedy in Bangladesh,” examined the dangerous safety conditions and controls at factories in Bangladesh where workers sewed clothes for iconic America brands such as Tommy Hilfiger and Wal-Mart, and was honored with the 2013 Hillman Prize for Broadcast

LOWE'S STATEMENT/KEY MESSAGES:

- Ensuring the quality of the products we sell at Lowe's is top priority. We require our suppliers to comply with all industry or government standards, and the window coverings we offer are tested by third party labs to ensure they meet or exceed any requirements.
- We currently offer the largest in-stock selection of cordless blinds and shades in retail, available in every U.S. store and online.
- Lowe's is aggressively exploring options to eliminate window coverings with cords that can form a hazardous loop from our product offering – a step that goes well beyond today's requirements.
- We have a goal of eliminating these products from our in-stock assortment by the end of 2018.
- To achieve this goal, we are working with manufacturers to innovate the technology required to make cordless products more accessible to all customers.
- In the interim, we will continue to expand cordless options in every window covering category, to offer enhanced cordless solutions to our customers.
- As we make progress toward our 2018 goal, we will continue to work with other stakeholders to drive customer awareness of alternate products and their benefits to best meet the needs of households frequented by young children.

ADDITIONAL FACTS:

- Lowe's is a member of the Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC) and we work closely with Parents for Window Blind Safety (PFWBS).
- All of Lowe's private brand cordless window coverings (allen + roth) have been certified with the PFWBS seal of approval. *(NOTE: Packaging with the PFWBS seal of approval began shipping on 7/22/2015 and is in RDC's now for store replenishment. Blinds are a slow turning category meaning it could take a long time for a small low volume store to sell the existing product and be replenished with the new.)*
- The PFWBS feature our cordless private brand products on their web site.
- All of Lowe's stock vertical, cellular and roller shades are considered cordless.
- All of the window coverings offered at Lowe's are tested by a 3rd party testing lab [Bureau Veritas] to assure compliance with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard (the window blind standards for the US is ANSI/WCMA A100.1-2012 and the standard for Canada is CSA Z600).

Q&A:**1. Why wait until 2018? IKEA announced Oct. 1 they will transition fully to window blinds with no cords or inaccessible cords by Jan. 2016. Why not immediately stop selling blinds that could hurt children?**

- Lowe's is aggressively exploring options to eliminate window coverings with cords that can form a hazardous loop from our product offering.
- We are working with manufacturers to innovate the technology required to make cordless products more accessible to all customers, and believe current progress will allow for that within this timeframe.
- We are committed to helping create a permanent solution by continuing to move the category towards innovative cordless products that are both functional and accessible to all customers. We'll do this by delivering solutions to make cordless products an even more attractive choice for all customers – whether or not children frequent their homes.

2. How did you land on 2018 to exit in-stock corded window coverings? Can you meet this goal?

- We are working with manufacturers to innovate the technology required to make cordless products more accessible to all customers, and believe current progress will allow for that within this timeframe.
- We're confident we can meet the 2018 goal we've set.

If pressed:

- We are committed to helping create a permanent solution by continuing to move the category towards innovative cordless products that are both functional and accessible to all customers. We'll do this by delivering solutions to make cordless products an even more attractive choice for all customers – whether or not children frequent their homes.

3. Do you acknowledge that these products are not safe?

- Customers with homes frequented by young children should consider cordless blinds and shades as a permanent solution to eliminate the potential risks. We offer many resources, including product packaging, information on Lowes.com and in-store signage to help educate customers with small children about the benefits of cordless blinds and shades, and to help them easily identify cordless products.

4. What will you do before the end of 2018 to ensure products you offer don't pose a risk to child safety?

- As we make progress toward our 2018 goal, we will continue to work with stakeholders to drive customer awareness of alternate products and their benefits to best meet the needs of households frequented by young children, as well as to continue to expand cordless options in every window covering category to offer enhanced cordless solutions to our customers.

Customer Education:

- As we continue to aggressively explore solutions to eliminate window coverings with cords that can form a hazardous loop, we have taken several steps to help our customers as they select window blinds and shades. We are:
 - Using product packaging, Lowes.com and in-store signage to help educate customers with small children about the benefits of cordless blinds and shades, and to help them easily identify cordless products.
 - Conducting refresher training with our sales associates on the benefits of cordless window blinds and shades and encouraging them to work closely with customers to understand their needs so they can recommend cordless products to customers who have households frequented by small children.
 - Updating Lowes.com for easier navigation to our cordless offering and a link to Window Covering Safety Council safety information to help educate consumers.
 - During October, National Window Covering Safety Month, we are offering discounts on cordless products, including free cordless upgrades on many custom products. Promotions will be featured prominently in Lowe's advertising.
 - Adding the recently announced Window Covering Manufacturers Association "Best for Kids" certification, along with the Parents for Window Blind Safety seal of approval, to product packaging will make it even easier for customers with small children to identify/select cordless options.

Coordinating with Stakeholders:

- Lowe's works closely with Parents for Window Blind Safety (PFWBS). All of Lowe's private brand cordless window coverings have been certified with the PFWBS seal of approval. Products with the PFWBS seal on packaging began shipping in July 2015. PFWBS features some of [our cordless options](#) on their website.
- Lowe's is a member of the Window Coverings Safety Council (WCSC) and makes WCSC's safety [resources](#) available to our customers.
- Lowe's has had ongoing dialog with the CPSC regarding corded window coverings for some time, and that discussion continues today.

Product Innovation:

- Lowe's has challenged window covering manufacturers (our suppliers) to develop additional solutions/technology to make cordless products even more affordable for customers and therefore more accessible for more families.
 - We currently stock one of those possible solutions, allen + roth cordless mini-blinds, in more than 700 stores and online.
 - We are in talks with manufacturers about newer technologies that will eliminate the need for cords to operate blinds and shades, while improving functionality.

5. We understand earlier this year Lowe's refused to meet with the CPSC about this issue. Why?

- We remain willing to again meet in person with CPSC representatives.
- We have had ongoing dialog with the CPSC for some time, and that discussion continues today. Lowe's representatives last met in person with a number of CPSC representatives at the CPSC headquarters in Bethesda in June 2014.
- Since that time, we've continued those conversations and have provided the CPSC with updates and additional information. Most recently, we shared our goal of eliminating window coverings with cords that can form a hazardous loop from our in-stock assortment by the end of 2018.

6. Are you educating parents of small children about the risks of products with visible cords?

- Through product packaging, Lowes.com and in-store signage, we provide information to make consumers more aware of the blind and shade choices available, and we encourage households frequented by young children to install cordless blinds and shades.
- See #4

7. Lowe's has previously focused on consumer choice of window treatments, and your new commitment is only to stop offering them in-stock by the end of 2018 – not to stop selling them. If one product has been proven to be unsafe, why should a retailer continue to sell it?

- Lowe's is aggressively exploring options to eliminate window coverings with cords that can form a hazardous loop from our product offering. As you've noted, we have a goal of eliminating these products from our in-stock assortment by the end of 2018.
- To achieve this we are working with manufacturers to innovate the technology required to make cordless products more accessible to all customers.
- Customers have a variety of needs, and have told us they prefer to have a variety of window covering options so they can choose the product that best suits their household situation—from style to price to accessibility.
- Sometimes those needs are in conflict—a senior citizen or disabled person may be unable to lift window blinds without cords and a parent of young children may wish to keep cords out of reach or purchase a product with no accessible cords.
- We are committed to helping create a permanent solution by continuing to move the category towards innovative products that are both functional and accessible to all customers. This will make cordless products an even more attractive choice for all customers – whether or not children frequent their homes.

8. How big a part of your business is window blinds/cordless window blinds?

- We do not break out the sales of window blinds specifically; however the home fashions, storage and cleaning category that includes window coverings, represents approximately 6 percent of 2014 sales.
- According to industry statistics, Lowe's and Home Depot each represent approximately 20 percent of the in-stock blinds and shades market, followed by Walmart at 12 percent and JC Penney at 4.3% percent.

9. Will recently announced Window Covering Manufacturers Association (WCMA) standards address the issue?

- The WCMA standard is progressing, and Lowe's supports any effort that makes products safer. We work closely with suppliers, advocacy groups and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to improve the safety of window coverings and develop consistent safety standards across the industry.

10. Lowe's is being sued by families who've had children die or become permanently disabled after they were strangled by window blind cords from products purchased at Lowe's. What does Lowe's have to say about these lawsuits?

- While we can't directly discuss any pending lawsuits, we can tell you that to meet the needs of households with small children, Lowe's carries the largest in-stock selection of cordless window coverings in retail.
- We provide educational information on product packaging, Lowes.com and in-store signs, to help all our customers make the right choice for their home.
- Employees are trained to work closely with our customers to understand their needs and recommend cordless products to customers who have small children in their homes.

11. Do the window coverings Lowe's sells have a break-away pull cord feature?

- As a result of concerns raised by various stakeholders that this feature is not effective, Lowe's does not require corded window coverings to have a break-away pull cord.
- Potential issues identified during testing of break-way pull cord products, including difficulty getting these cords to actually break away and, even upon successful break away, having a cord or pieces of cord remaining in place or accessible that could still form a hazardous loop lead us to focus our efforts on finding a more permanent solution.

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