



COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE
PRESS RELEASE

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Safer lighters in our shops?

We note with satisfaction that, as of today, it will be forbidden to sell non child-resistant lighters and novelty lighters¹ across the European Union. In May 2006 the Commission adopted an emergency measure which aimed to ban novelty lighters from the European market and to equip disposable lighters with a mechanism which would prevent young children from using them.

This constitutes a positive step towards a better protection of our children. Accidents linked to fires caused by children playing with lighters lead to between 1500 and 1900 injuries every year, of which 30 to 40 are fatal². The number of this type of accidents has already drastically fallen in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand since a similar measure was introduced in 1994.

Given that the ban is only temporary, it will have to be renewed by May 2008. We count on the Commission to revise some of the exemptions contained in the Decision, which we consider to be far too vague ("luxury" and refillable lighters are not covered for example) and we call on Member States and Market Surveillance Authorities to ensure that the Decision is strictly adhered to.

Monique Goyens, BEUC Director General, stated: "This Decision is a step in the right direction. However, we will stay vigilant regarding its implementation and we will try to ensure that the current exemptions will be removed when this ban is renewed."

Stephen Russell, ANEC³ Secretary General, said: "The burden is now on industry to make sure it respects the Commission Decision and places only child resistant lighters on the market. But we need Member States to make the resources available to their national market surveillance and inspection authorities to ensure the ban is upheld."

END

¹ The danger is even greater when lighters are attractive for children. "Novelty" lighters are problematic in that not only are they not child-resistant, they also seem fun because they are in the shape of a little car, an animal, a mini mobile phone or because they light up or make a noise when touched...

² Report on accidents caused by children under five years old playing with lighters – UK Department of Trade and Industry (1997) and website of DG SANCO, European Commission

³ ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation

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