

March 11<sup>th</sup> 2008

**EU join forces - introduces sales ban of non child resistant lighters and novelty lighters from March 11th 2008.**

Children's play with dangerous lighters has caused several house fires and inflicted fatal injuries to the consumers for a period of several years.

The assessment of the occurrence of fires and injuries in Europe has resulted in an agreement between the Member States and the European Commission to take necessary preventive measures to reduce the number of fires and injuries.

One important measure is the Commission Decision launched in May 2006 regarding the ban of non child resistant lighters and novelty lighters.

This decision obliges manufacturers, importers and retailers of lighters to be aware of the responsibilities and the safety requirements in the marketing of disposable lighters. According to the general Product Safety Directive only safe products are allowed to be made available for the consumer. This requirement imposes obligations for the business to take necessary measures to comply with this as far as disposable lighters are concerned.

Comprehensive cooperation between all interested parties has been carried out in order to prepare the inner market for complying with the Decision. DG Sanco has arranged several meetings with Member states authorities, representatives for business, consumers associations and customs authorities. The outcome of these meetings gives reason to hope for a successful follow up on the decision.

It is also agreed that the member states enforcement authorities play a significant role in the follow up, especially with respect to market surveillance. Efforts have been made to develop plans for the monitoring the market. Such plans include information activities, meetings with the stakeholders and market surveillance with producers and importers.

Since March 2007 DG Sanco, PROSAFE and several Member States have cooperated in a joint programme for monitoring the production and import of non child resistant and novelty lighters. This joint market surveillance programme was initiated and funded by DG Sanco, further developed by Prosafe and carried out by 13 member States. The official start was on September 1st.

Since September 1<sup>st</sup> all participating Member States have carried out actions related to import of non child resistant and novelty lighters. These actions performed in cooperation with customs authorities show that not all importers are aware of the import ban. This fact gives reasons to continue the import surveillance also after March 11<sup>th</sup> 2008.

Results of joint actions:

13 member states participate in the financial scheme of the joint action and several more join the meetings and the discussions.

It is not possible to present a full overview of the results of the joint action yet, but intermediate figures can be stated as an indication of the level of activity:

- More than 200 inspections have been carried out at importers, wholesalers and retailers in Europe.
- More than 80 containers or consignments have been reported to have been checked upon import to Europe.
- Some 350 lighter models have been screened by the authorities,
- As a result of the screening, 9 models undergo laboratory tests now and another 10 will be sent to the laboratory in the coming weeks.
- Another result is that measures have been taken against more than 40 lighter models. Almost half of the measures were temporary but 17 lighters were found to be so dangerous that RAPEX notifications were issued.

Further actions in relation to the follow up of the Decision are necessary. The Decision includes sales ban from any kind of retailer from March 11<sup>th</sup> 2008. In addition to border surveillance in cooperation with customs, actions towards retailers are currently being planned and will be carried out continuously after March 11<sup>th</sup>. In addition to market surveillance actions, attention will also be given to information campaigns towards consumers and stakeholders that will include elements of practical experience and advice.

Results from the ongoing actions indicate that the flow of dangerous lighters into Europe is decreasing. Enforcement authorities will continue the present programme to the end of 2009 in order to ensure that business is making efforts to comply with the decision.

There is reason to believe that business will respond to the results of joint actions and consequently contribute to a safer Europe with respect to house fires and injuries resulting from such incidents.