

Newsletter from PROSAFE

Joint Action 2014 tackles product safety issues across the EU

Joint Action 2014 (JA2014), the biggest cross-border market surveillance activity to date, has just concluded. Under PROSAFE's coordination, 35 authorities from 25 European countries have taken action against unsafe products in order to safeguard European consumers.

Over the past two years, European product safety authorities have been cooperating in the JA2014 to identify and resolve issues with unsafe products found on the European market. The Action, co-funded by the European Union, provided a valuable platform for Member State market surveillance officials to work together and address product safety issues across the EU.

The JA2014 has led to the submission of over 128 notifications in the Rapid Alert System from dangerous non-food products (RAPEX). Consumers can find more up-to-date information about measures taken on the European Commission's website¹. The results from the individual product activities have been followed up by market surveillance authorities throughout the European Economic Area.

The sampling of the products is done following a risk-based approach. When identifying samples market surveillance officials make an effort to target products which are more likely to be found unsafe when they are tested. This may mean that they target products that are formally non-compliant due to a lack of warnings or labelling or that they target products as a result of a visual inspection which identifies a likely non-compliance. They may also target a specific sector of the market about which they have concerns. This approach helps ensure that the authorities make the best possible use of the limited resources that they have at their disposal.

With the rise of online shopping a significant number of the products tested were identified through e-commerce channels. Valuable feedback has also been given to the European Standards development organisations in respect of the standards for many of these products. Other activities undertaken in the framework of the Joint Action have advanced our understanding of risk assessment and improved cooperation with customs.

The key results from the Joint Action are as follows:

- **Safety Barriers**

The action in numbers: Inspectors from the twelve participating countries carried out inspections and identified 106 safety barriers as potentially dangerous. They were tested at an accredited laboratory, and 67% of them failed to meet the safety requirements of the relevant current standards. The highest rate of non-compliances by far related to gaps, security from the impact test, protrusion hazards, entrapment hazards and barrier function. In all, 36% of the products tested presented a serious non-compliance or high risk. Sales bans were implemented on 14 products, 21 were withdrawn from the market and 22 were recalled from consumers. 20 RAPEX notifications have been submitted by the Member States authorities.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers_safety/safety_products/rapex/alerts/main/index.cfm?event=main.listNotifications.

Main recommendations to consumers: Consumers are advised, when purchasing a safety barrier, to check whether the barrier is the correct size for the width of the opening. Incorrect installation can be dangerous, hence the importance of reading the instructions prior to fitting the barrier.

- **Acoustic Toys**

The action in numbers: 371 samples from sixteen countries across the European Economic Area were tested. 10% of the tested acoustic toys were found non-compliant due to peak sound or continuous sound levels greater than what is permitted in the standard EN 71-1:2011+A2:2013. The acoustic toy group with the highest non-compliance was cap-firing toys - 28% (all presenting a serious risk), followed by close-to-the-ear toys 20% (of which 50% had serious risk); and wind toys 14% (of which 70% a serious risk). Hand-held toys, percussion toys, voice toys and rattles have a percentage of non-compliance of less than 6% with no products presenting a serious risk. Market surveillance authorities issued three recalls, 30 sales-bans and/or withdrawals from the market and 26 RAPEX alerts were notified or are in the process of being notified. An important element of this activity was the development of a risk assessment approach based on a report produced by an expert in the field. This expert's report will be useful going forward in respect of any products presenting acoustic hazards.

Main recommendations to consumers: Consumers may wish to note that in the case of percussion toys and cap-firing toys, they should at least carry the following warning on the toy or on its packaging: "Warning. Do not use close to the ear! Misuse may cause damage to hearing." Not having such a warning could possibly mean that something within the toy may not be safe.

- **LED and CFL lamps**

The action in numbers: Market Surveillance authorities from ten countries sent 117 lamps for testing. 39% of the tested lamps had deficiencies that will or may endanger the safety of the users. Several lamps had many critical defects that demonstrate bad or careless approach in the design and construction of the lamp and the selection of components. The most common serious non-compliances were related to the general safety requirements concerning their construction, failed by six tested samples, protection against electric shock failed by five samples, the electric strength test failed by nine samples, and the isolation requirements failed by eight samples. Two recalls have been launched, whilst thirteen products were banned from sale and twelve were voluntarily withdrawn from the market. Nine RAPEX notifications have been submitted with more in preparation.

Main recommendations to consumers: When purchasing LED and CFL lamps, consumers should check that the products bear a CE-marking, the brand name and necessary technical data. The energy label and the contact details of the manufacturer should be present on the package of the lamp. Consumers should also check whether the LED lamp is suitable for dimming applications.

- **Fireworks**

The action in numbers: 424 samples from nine countries were tested. The market surveillance exercise included the testing of a new category of firework termed 'compound fireworks', which has recently been introduced into the European market. 247 (58%) products were found to be non-compliant. Of these, 22 presented a serious risk and nine a high risk. The critical non-compliances related to the materials used, the design of the fireworks, the duration of the fuse, the stability of the flight and the firework exploding or

otherwise failing. Sale bans have been implemented in respect of 26 products. Twelve RAPEX notifications have been made to date with more in preparation.

Main recommendations to consumers: When purchasing fireworks, consumers should look either for the 'CE'-marked products, or the ones labelled in accordance with the national safety standard for fireworks (if applicable). Moreover, the 'Instructions for Use' should be written in the language of the country where the products are sold. Consumers are advised to always read the instructions carefully before setting off the firework.

- **Power Tools - angle grinders**

The action in numbers: Market surveillance authorities from twelve countries across Europe sampled sixty samples. None of them passed all the applicable clauses of the relevant standards. 85% of those tested presented two, three or even four non-conformities. The lower end of the market was targeted as there was concern expressed about low-quality products being sold cheaply. The results demonstrated the value in targeting this segment of the market. The inspectors could identify potentially non-compliant products in their sampling, so no resources were wasted in testing safe and compliant products.

The main non-compliances found as a result of the testing were 'mechanical strength' in protection guard fixation (50%) and '(over)heating' under normal load (22%). Twenty products have been voluntarily taken off the market and fifteen were removed by the authorities. Another important finding from the activity was the lack of *a restart prevention device* in 73% of the sampled products, all manufactured in 2014 or 2015. This important safety feature is now required following an amendment of the appropriate standard in April 2016. Considering this a simple screening exercise is planned for the next Joint Action to ensure that these products have been withdrawn from the marketplace.

Main recommendations to consumers: When buying angle grinders, consumers can ask for a demonstration of this restart prevention function as follows: plug in the angle grinder and switch-on; hold the running grinder switched-on, while plugging out directly followed by a renewed plug in. This may not lead to a 'restart' while the switch is still on. For this powerful tool consumers are advised to read the instructions for use attentively, in particular the safety instructions for cutting and kick-back prevention.

Further information about the products mentioned above may be found on the national authority's or the RAPEX website for unsafe products posing a serious risk to consumers.

Caution!

The above results are based on samples of products from the markets in the participating countries. As in any routine market surveillance activity, the results represent the targeted efforts that authorities undertake to identify unsafe products. They do not give a statistically valid picture of the situation of the whole market. Tests were undertaken at accredited laboratories and focussed on those safety requirements that have the largest impact on consumer safety.

Background information

This information is issued by PROSAFE and the 35 participating authorities in the Joint Market Surveillance Action on GPSD Products 2014 - JA 2014. The participants come from 25 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy,



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Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom) plus Iceland and Norway.

The Action is coordinated by PROSAFE (Product Safety Forum of Europe), a non-profit organisation that brings together market surveillance officers from all over Europe and across the world. Visit www.prosafe.org to find more information about JA2014 and the other Joint Actions coordinated by PROSAFE.

Disclaimer

This PROSAFE newsletter is part of the Joint Market Surveillance Action on GPSD Products - JA2014, which received funding from the European Union's Consumer Programme (2014-2020)'.

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