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Governor



Thomas A. Maul
Commissioner

STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF MENTAL RETARDATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Directors, Voluntary Agencies
DDSO Directors
Associate Commissioners

FROM: Jan Abelseth 
Interim Deputy Commissioner
Division of Quality Assurance

DATE: February 18, 1998

SUBJECT: Halogen Lamp Advisory Follow-up

As a follow-up to the October 20, 1997 advisory on halogen lamp safety, it has come to our attention that the Consumer Product Safety Commission has advised that owners of halogen lamps should pick up a free wire or glass guard. Free guards and instructions should be available at the following stores: Ames, B.J.'s Wholesale Club, Hechingers/Home Quarters, Home Base, Home Depot, Ikea, Kmart, Lowes, Montgomery Ward, Office Depot, Target and Walmart. Also, if the guards are not available at the above stores, call 1-800-985-2220.

Consumer Reports tested a lamp with the new guard. Before the guard was installed, a cotton comforter burned in minutes. After installation, the comforter was merely scorched after an hour. Consumer Report also suggests the following actions even with the new guard: Turn off the lamp when leaving a room; keep lamps away from bedding and draperies; and use only bulbs of 300 watts or less.

Please call Joel Altschul of my staff at (518) 473-7032 if you have any questions.



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DATE: October 20, 1997

SUBJECT: Halogen Lamp Advisory

There have been many fires recently caused by the use of halogen floor lamps. To date, there have been over 100 fires and ten deaths which have been directly attributed to these lamps, according to the New York State Consumer Protection Board (CPB). The purpose of the memorandum is to advise providers of the potential for disaster associated with halogen floor lamp use.

There are a few basic problems with halogen floor lamp design which should prompt providers using these lamps to take notice of the problems and address them immediately. First, halogen lamps operate at temperatures far in excess of other types of bulbs. A typical 300 watt halogen bulb can reach temperatures of 970 degrees F. In contrast, a 75 watt incandescent bulb operates at about 260 degrees F, as tested by the CPB.

Tests conducted by the CPB found that a piece of pine wood took 1 minute 43 seconds to ignite once placed over the top of a halogen lamp, a paper airplane, 56 seconds and a T-shirt burned through two layers when draped over the top of the lamp in only 24 seconds.

The other major problem with halogen floor lamps is that they tend to be extremely easy to tip over which greatly increases the chance of fire. Tests showed that it took only 17 ounces of force to tip a lamp over. The CPB suggests that owners bolt the lamp to the floor if it's placed in a high traffic area of the home or office.

The CPB has issued a Consumer Safety Tip Fact Sheet regarding halogen floor lamp safety. It is attached for your information. I strongly urge you to review it carefully and assess any potential dangerous conditions which might be associated with halogen lamps in the programs you operate.

CONSUMER NEWS

From Your
**New York State Consumer Protection Board
and
New York State Department of State**

TIMOTHY S. CAREY, CHAIRMAN AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ALEXANDER F. TREADWELL, SECRETARY OF STATE

STATE FIRE ADMINISTRATOR, JAMES BURNS

GEORGE E. PATAKI, GOVERNOR

For Release: Immediately

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**CONSUMER CHIEF, SECRETARY OF STATE AND STATE FIRE ADMINISTRATOR URGE
CONSUMERS TO AVOID BUYING HALOGEN TORCHIERE LAMPS --
SAY LAMPS POSE SERIOUS RISK TO CONSUMERS
Release "Put Out the Light" TV PSA**

(Albany, New York) Calling them "open fires in our homes," New York State Consumer Protection Board (CPB) Chairman Timothy S. Carey, Secretary of State Alexander (Sandy) F. Treadwell and State Fire Administrator James Burns today released a television Public Service Announcement (PSA) warning consumers to avoid buying Halogen Torchiere lamps and encouraging consumers who've purchased them and have small children or pets to discard them as soon as possible.

The three officials unveiled a new Statewide PSA called "Put Out The Light," which features State Fire Chief James Burns, includes footage of the Lionel Hampton Halogen Torchiere lamp tragedy and footage of the Halogen Torchiere lamp tests conducted by Consumer Reports Television.

Carey said, "there are an estimated 40,000,000 Halogen Torchiere lamps in U.S. homes with possibly 3,000,000 in New York State. To date over 100 fires and ten deaths have been directly linked to these lamps. Most recently, jazz great Lionel Hampton's home was destroyed because of a Halogen lamp; in Albany, a Halogen Torchiere lamp was directly linked to a fire which resulted in two young children being severely injured; and, in Geneva, a firefighter died of a heart attack while attempting to extinguish a fire started by a Halogen Torchiere lamp."

"Consumers need to be aware that the tubular Halogen Torchiere bulbs in these lamps operate at temperatures much hotter than other types of bulbs that are commonly used in most home lamps. In tests conducted by the CPB, we found that the 300W Halogen torchiere lamp can reach 970 degrees F. In contrast, a 75W bulb operates at about 260 degrees F."

"The results of our tests speak for themselves. A piece of pine wood took one minute and 43 seconds to ignite once placed over the top of this lamp. A piece of cardboard took one minute and 17 seconds to ignite. A paper airplane took 56 seconds before going up in flames. An 80% polyester 20% cotton T-Shirt burned through two layers draped over the top of the lamp in only 24 seconds."

Secretary of State Treadwell also spoke about the dangers of Halogen Torchiere bulbs as well as how energy inefficient they are. "A greater danger to consumers can occur if a burned out 300W bulb is replaced with a 500W bulb. Consumers should avoid replacing a 300W bulb with a 500W bulb. In one case, a consumer who replaced a 300W bulb with a 500W bulb was injured after the bulb shattered. Upgrading a 300W to a 500W bulb not only increases the chances of a fire occurring, it will also result in an increase in a consumer's monthly electric bill."

"300W bulbs, which is the wattage found in most Halogen Torchiere lamps, are extremely energy inefficient. Operating a lamp 6 hours a day costs from \$73 per year in the Central Hudson service territory, \$84 per year in the Niagara Mohawk service area and \$109 per year in the Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) service area. While buying these lamps for \$15 dollars or less seems to be a good buy, if you're paying \$75 or more annually in electricity costs running these lamps, those initial savings have just gone up in smoke."

State Fire Administrator James Burns said, "In addition to the wattage problems associated with these lamps they are extremely easy to tip over which greatly increases the chance of fire. Our tests showed that it required only 17 ounces of force applied at the brass rung which is 46 inches from the floor to tip. If consumers decide that they want to purchase or keep the lamp they have, we'd suggest they bolt the lamp to the floor if its used it in high traffic areas of a home or place of work and to carefully review our Halogen Torchiere safety fact sheet."

"Consumers must never allow Halogen lamps to be placed where either the bulb itself, its protective glass covering or grating may come near any combustible materials. Never use torchiere lamps in children's bedrooms or playrooms. Children may play with lamps or place combustibles, such as stuffed toys, clothing, or paper airplanes or plastic balls in the vicinity of the bulb; and never leave a torchiere Halogen lamp on when you leave a room or when you're not at home," he said.

To help keep consumers informed, the officials have prepared a 18-Point Halogen Lamp Safety Guide that will be distributed to consumer advocates, local and state government officials and consumers across the state. It's also available on the CPB's WWW page.

In closing, Caray, Treadwell and Burns again stressed how dangerous Halogen lamps are. "Halogen lamps have and continue to cause fires and death. We strongly caution consumers to carefully review all eighteen items listed in our Consumer Safety Tip fact sheet and to carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions if they currently own one of these lamps. However, the results of our tests and the footage in our PSA speak for themselves—consumers would be much better off not buying or keeping a Halogen Torchiere Lamp. Additionally, since there are so many of these lamps in New York State, we urgently call upon families, friends and neighbors, as well as religious leaders and family counselors to help everyone fully understand how dangerous Halogen lamps are."