



## NATIONAL CONSUMERS LEAGUE

1701 K Street, NW, Suite 1200 Washington, DC 20006  
Main: (202) 835-3323 Fax: (202) 835-0747 [www.nclnet.org](http://www.nclnet.org)

June 1, 2016

Chairman Elliot Kaye  
Commissioners Robert Adler, Marietta Robinson, Ann Marie Buerkle and Joseph Mohorovic  
U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission  
4330 EastWest Highway  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

**SUBJECT:** Agenda and Priorities FY 2017 and 2018

Dear Chairman Kaye and Commissioners:

The National Consumers League (NCL) appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments to you today. NCL is a private, nonprofit advocacy group representing consumers on marketplace and workplace issues. Founded in 1899, we are the nation's oldest consumer advocacy organization.

NCL is focusing its comments today, as we have since 2012, on the issue of table saw safety. Table saws are among the most hazardous products that CPSC regulates. They cause tens of thousands of emergency room-treated injuries each year, including more than 10 amputations every day.

It doesn't have to be that way. Safety technology exists that has been proven to virtually *eliminate* all of these devastating injuries. The Commission was petitioned in 2003 to enact a safety standard to require table saws to meet that level of safety. NCL became involved with this issue in 2010, when we discovered that the agency had done nothing about the petition for seven years. We were gratified the next year when the Commission voted unanimously to begin an ANPR on table saw safety.

Incredibly, however, five years have gone by, and the Commission has yet to issue a proposed rule on table saws. Not even a proposal, let alone a final rule. That is unbelievable to us. NCL has a simple message today: CPSC must act with urgency to finally put an end to the devastating injuries caused by table saws.

Injuries from table saws happen in a split second, but they last a lifetime. NCL has met a number of these victims. They suffer debilitating pain, disfigurement and career-ending, life-altering disabilities. These brave victims came to Washington, DC to meet with you and with their Congressional representatives to urge the CPSC to act as quickly as possible to protect others from the unnecessary suffering they are enduring. Each time, you have given them your time, attention and sympathy. Unfortunately, what you haven't done is enact a safety standard.

As you may recall, last year NCL's Executive Director Sally Greenberg appeared with one of these victims – Joshua Ward from Sisters, Oregon. In 2012, when he was a high school junior in wood shop class, Josh was making cuts to a piece of plywood using an older model table saw. Unfortunately, the plywood caught and kicked back, violently drawing his left hand into the spinning blades, severing three of his fingers, and breaking multiple bones in his hand. He had to undergo numerous surgeries, suffered from recurring infections, and after all of that, he was forced to give up his lifelong dream of becoming a firefighter.

Tens of thousands of people suffer similar injuries every year working on table saws that are more dangerous than they need to be. The CPSC has the power to put an end to these unnecessary tragedies. But you must move quickly because every day brings 10 more avoidable amputations.

As you know, Underwriters Laboratories (UL) has been working for nearly four years on a voluntary safety standard for table saws that would include a requirement for an Active Injury Mitigation System (AIMS). This approach to table saw design has been demonstrated in the field for more than 12 years to greatly reduce the unreasonable risks that manifest tens of thousands of serious injuries each year, including some 3,500 amputations.

NCL sits on UL's Consumer Advisory Council, and we are a big supporter of the work it has done in the past on numerous product safety standards. However, we are deeply disappointed to learn that UL has been unable to produce a UL table saw standard with an AIMS requirement. The UL Standards Technical Panel (STP) used for table saws is heavily dominated by industry members who have voted NO each time UL has proposed an AIMS requirement. UL says it is powerless to overrule the committee's vote. Frankly, we don't understand why UL cannot include requirements it deems necessary to create an adequate safety standard under the UL banner. Unfortunately, as this case illustrates, unless the industry agrees voluntarily to adopt adequate safety measures to protect consumers, the change simply does not occur and consumers remain at serious risk—an unreasonable risk.

We have waited a long time to give the voluntary standards system a chance to bring needed protection to the market, and it has failed to deliver. Since UL cannot do the job to protect users of table saws from these horrendous injuries, consumers must rely on CPSC to take prompt and affirmative action. We urge you to give this project your highest priority.


CPSC's operating plan for FY2016 included the expectation that a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for table saws would be issued by the end of the fiscal year. The Commission's budget request for FY2017 says the Commission expects to issue a final rule within the fiscal year, which ends on September 30, 2017. This rule is long overdue. NCL can't urge you strongly enough to adhere to this schedule. Please put an end to these preventable and heartbreaking tragedies.

Thank you for considering our views.



Sally Greenberg  
Executive Director

Sincerely,



Karin Bolte  
Director, Health Policy