

Oral Testimony of the American National Standards Institute
Before the
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection
Testimony on Enhancing the Safety of Toys

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Statement of

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Thank you, Chairman Rush.

My name is Lane Hallenbeck and I am vice president for accreditation services at the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). My responsibilities include directing programs that assess the competence of conformity assessment bodies. In lay terms, this means I work with organizations that determine whether products, services, systems or people comply with requirements found in voluntary standards or mandatory regulations.

ANSI is coordinator of the U.S. private-sector led and public sector-supported standards and conformity assessment system. In this role, we work with a broad range of industries. We speak as the U.S. voice in standardization forums around the globe. And, through our network of members, we represent the interests of more than 125,000 organizations and companies and 3.5 million professionals worldwide.

During its 90-year history, the Institute has demonstrated a unique ability to bring together diverse stakeholders in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. We have successfully:

- teamed with the Council of Better Business Bureaus to tackle identity theft,
- partnered with the 9-11 Commission and the DHS to address emergency preparedness and homeland security, and
- helped Health and Human Services to develop a secure electronic health record for every American.

In all our efforts, protecting the safety of consumers has been of paramount importance. It is a key element of the Institute's mission, and we are committed to its implementation.

(pause)

Earlier this year, the Toy Industry Association asked ANSI to help them design a program of testing, inspection and education that could be implemented across the industry's global supply chain.

ANSI responded with a three-point proposal:

First, we would help the toy industry analyze existing standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment programs.

Next, we would form technical working groups and coordinate their efforts to design testing and inspection methodology programs.

Finally, we would recommend steps to improve compliance activities throughout the toy industry's global supply chain.

TIA accepted this proposal and I, along with several ANSI colleagues, began working with the association and its members two months ago.

Almost immediately, we agreed that two criteria were necessary for success in the global marketplace: common product requirements and harmonized test methods.

Our solutions will draw from a toolbox of conformity assessment resources. Not just testing and inspection, but also systems auditing, accredited certification programs, and – of course – education and training.

- The program we are developing will be committed to improving product safety, not just reducing the number of recalls.
- It will be sustainable and forward looking – to anticipate and prevent problems yet unknown.
- It will be considerate of all types of suppliers – regardless of size or location.
- And it will support the concept of “One standard . . . One test . . . Accepted Everywhere.”

We are making great progress. Three working groups on Process Control, Testing and Reporting, and Design are meeting on a weekly basis. During bi-weekly teleconferences, they report to a Steering Committee comprised of the WG leaders, and representatives of consumers, the U.S. government, and staff from both ANSI and TIA.

Recommendations from the Working Groups and Steering Committee are targeted for broad review and approval – including a public comment period and a formal review and endorsement by TIA – before year-end.

Implementation is expected to begin in early 2008.

(pause)

Government, industry and consumers need to work at a single purpose if we are to restore marketplace confidence in imported goods.

Regulatory bodies that lead oversight and regulation for consumer health and safety issues will not be able to handle the workload alone. ANSI is proud to help coordinate the public/private partnership.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

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