

Securing Safety in the Sand:

How I Contributed to Standards for Beach Umbrellas

by Joan C. Smith

Potomac Grange #1, Washington, D.C.

If you are on social media, you may have seen viral posts featuring frightening images of flying beach umbrellas threatening to ruin beachgoers' fun in the sun. As a Florida resident, I did not need to see the social media posts to know that untethered or poorly-made beach umbrellas are dangerous. That's one reason why in October 2022, I joined an ASTM International consumer products committee (F15) that was working to develop a standard specification for beach umbrellas and anchor devices. ASTM International (astm.org), a member and audited designator of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), develops and publishes consensus technical standards for many consumer products.

Standards for Safety

In July 2024, ASTM introduced the new standard (F3681), which was overseen by ASTM's market umbrellas subcommittee (F15.79). According to the subcommittee's chair, Bill Schermerhorn, the standard was several years in the making and seeks to address known hazards posed by detached beach umbrellas. The standard's intended use is by manufacturers, retailers, safety managers, consumers, and more.

As a volunteer standards committee member, I was able to make valuable contributions to the development of this standard—working alongside manufacturers, retailers, and witnesses and survivors of beach umbrella accidents.

The specifications of the new ASTM safety standard

establish minimum requirements for safely anchoring all beach umbrellas. Participating engineers from the Consumer Product Safety Commission concluded (after extensive testing) that a beach umbrella 7.5 feet in diameter must be secured at the bottom pole with 75 pounds of resistance, or must remain secure in winds up to 30 miles per hour. The standard also addresses minimum requirements for larger umbrella sizes.

Manufacturers adhering to the standard must include a compliant anchoring device or recommend one that will make their product safe. Users of beach umbrellas, including commercial entities, will know through labeling if they are using a compliant and safe product.

I enjoyed being a part of this standards development process. It's rewarding to know that by sharing my consumer knowledge and experience with beach umbrellas, I played a part in

improving the safety of the products. I hope to join another standards committee in the future.

You can help, too!

ASTM is one of many ANSI-accredited standards developing organizations looking to involve more consumers. I urge all Grangers to get involved in standards development activities that are of interest to you. Be a part of helping to make the world work better, safer, and more effective! If you're interested, you can learn more through a webinar hosted by the ANSI. Each month, ANSI hosts, along with the Consumer Product Safety Commission Ombudsman, "Consumer Safety Central" to explain the voluntary standards process, and how consumers can make an impact. Register for the November 12 webinar here: <http://grange.biz/ANSI> or scan the QR code below.

Various standards developing organizations often attend the meeting to talk about opportunities to join one of their committees, and ANSI staff also provide details about new committees that are forming and recruiting consumer members. To learn about the wealth of standards activities, sign up for ANSI's "Standards Action" newsletter here: <https://www.ansi.org/resource-center/standards-action>. Each weekly edition comprises a round-up of the latest information available to help all interested parties get informed and engaged in standards.



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