



WINDOW COVERING

MANUFACTURERS

ASSOCIATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE NEW WINDOW COVERING STANDARD

What does the new standard do?

The standard sets design and performance requirements for window covering industry products including blinds, shades, shutters, curtains, curtain rods, drapes, drapery hardware and other window treatments manufactured, distributed or sold in the United States.

What are the updates from the last version of the standard?

Safety standard updates include substantially more robust performance requirements and testing standards; the development of new product warning labels and pictograms; and other technical changes intended to improve safety. The updates provide multiple options for achieving compliance without mandating any particular technology or solution. Highlights include:

- Adds requirements for durability and performance testing of the tension/hold down devices, including new requirements for anchoring, specific installation instructions and warnings.
- Provides a way to address new innovations for controlling cords that do not use tension devices.
- Adds new requirements for products that rely on “wide lift bands” to raise and lower window coverings.
- Requires a warning label and pictograms on the outside of stock packaging and merchandising materials for corded products.
- Adds and expands testing requirements for cord accessibility, hazardous loop testing, Roll Up style shade performance, and durability testing of all safety devices.

What products are covered under the new standard?

The standard applies to all types of window coverings sold or manufactured in the U.S. by all participants in the window coverings industry.

Because they are voluntary standards, does that mean compliance is not mandatory?

No. All companies who manufacture, distribute or sell window coverings in the U.S. must comply with the voluntary safety standards. Almost all consumer products have voluntary rather than mandatory safety standards –voluntary means that the industry worked with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), safety experts, and others, under the auspices of the respected American National Standards Institute (ANSI – which also oversees standards development for thousands of other products) to develop the standards.

How do these standards compare to other countries?

The WCMA/ANSI safety standard is already the most stringent in the world and the latest proposed revision to those standards makes them even more stringent and goes even further in minimizing potential risk.

Why didn't the new standard ban corded window products?

There is no universal technological solution for cordless window coverings that cover the wide variety of types of window coverings and users, and allow consumers to purchase window coverings at a cost comparable to current products. Cordless technology continues to evolve and is available in many popular styles, but cordless technology is not available in all product styles and sizes. The latest revisions to the voluntary standard will spur innovation and new technologies as it provides multiple options for achieving compliance without mandating any particular technology or solution. The industry continues to make progress to innovate designs and is cooperating with the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

How did the process for updating the safety standard work?

The standards revision process is managed according to the essential (mandatory) requirements of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the internationally-respected standards organization. ANSI coordinates the U.S. voluntary consensus standards system, providing a neutral forum and serves as a watchdog for standards development. There are approximately 9,500 standards that carry the ANSI designation. WCMA is the ANSI accredited standards developer for window covering products and follows all ANSI procedures.

How does ANSI monitor the process to ensure its essential requirements are being met, including "open" and "balanced"?

WCMA has conducted the development process for the latest revisions in full compliance with the rules and the spirit of the ANSI essential requirements. As ANSI states: "Accreditation by ANSI signifies that the procedures used by the standards body in connection with the development of American National Standards meet the Institute's essential requirements for openness, balance, consensus and due process." ANSI conducts regular audits of its accredited standards development organizations to ensure compliance.

What specifically has the WCMA done to ensure the standard development process is open and balanced?

WCMA took several steps to ensure that stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in the process. These include the creation of:

- Special Technical Committee membership category for those companies that would otherwise not be eligible. This resulted in over 40 companies, of all sizes and from all parts of the industry, participating in the current standard development process.
- Standard Steering Committee to allow for participation by additional stakeholders such as CPSC staff, representatives from various consumer safety advocate groups, test labs, Health Canada, the European CEN working group and industry representatives not part of the technical committee. These Steering Committee meetings, held monthly, were open to the public and WCMA also provided a call in number for phone participation. At several meetings members of the media and other trade organizations were also present.
- Six working groups to address the major comments that were received during the development of the current Provisional Standard. Members of these working groups included a wide range of industry representatives, Health Canada, test labs and retailers. Dozens of companies from all parts of the industry are represented and all with equal votes in the process.

Will there be more updates to the standard?

WCMA member companies continue to research, develop and bring to market exciting new products and we will continue to update the standard as needed to spur innovation and make certain that our products are as safe as possible. The safety of our consumers is our top priority and we are committed to continuing to improve product safety. Over the past 15 years the window covering industry has updated the standard six times, redesigned nearly every window-covering product and continues to fund the Window Covering Safety Council's ongoing national public education and information program.

Will the industry still offer free retrofit kits?

Yes. To help prevent cord accidents, the Window Covering Safety Council will continue to provide consumers with free retrofit devices, including free cord stops, tassels and tie-down devices. . A safety brochure with retrofit instructions is included with each order. To order a kit, visit www.windowcoverings.org or call 1-800-506-4636.

Where can I get more information?

For information on the standard, visit www.wcmanet.org. For information on the Window Covering Safety Council's ongoing national public education campaign, visit www.windowcoverings.org.