

FY2005 Market Monitoring Test Results

“Sample Purchase Tests implemented by Consumer Affairs Centers” with the technical support of NITE

(National Institute of Technology and Evaluation)

NITE has established the system of “Support for Consumer Affairs Centers’ product testing” to ensure the quality and safety of products as well as contributing to enhance the test techniques of consumer affairs centers.

Brief summaries of the tests implemented by various centers in FY2005 are shown below. Based on the results, they have organized the necessary information for consumers, covering purchasing and the safe use of consumer products. For further information, please contact the respective centers or go to their web sites.

Summer gloves

<Hokkaido Consumer Affairs Center>

Ultraviolet light (UV) has become an issue in terms of adverse effect on health. Various anti-UV textile products are sold in stores in the early spring, and more consumers are wearing gloves for UV protection when outside or driving. The Hokkaido Consumer Affairs Center has implemented a test of summer gloves sold in the market for UV shielding effects, color fastnesses against light and washing resistances.

Tests on the same products in different colors revealed that the UV shielding ratio was slightly higher with the samples in darker colors (black) than the ones in pale colors. The gloves made of coarse mesh or lace showed lower UV shielding effects regardless the colors.

Dehumidifier

<Miyagi Consumer Affairs Center>

In the rainy season, laundry doesn’t dry, and rooms become damp and moldy because of the humidity. Dehumidifiers therefore are commonly used as a way of removing moisture.

Recently available in the market are dehumidification dryers utilizing the dry air from dehumidifiers to dry laundry. In view of this, the Miyagi Consumer Affairs Center has conducted a test to confirm dehumidification performance, drying performance, safety and noise during operation.

There are two types of dehumidification systems which utilize either a compressor or a desiccant. For dehumidification performance, some samples failed to meet the declared performance rates of 95% or more. For temperatures at various parts, all samples complied with the requirements under the Electrical Appliance and Material Safety Law. However some samples displayed raised temperatures at the air outlets.

Shrinkage of interlining for shirts

<Tochigi Consumer Affairs Center>

Interlining cloths are generally used for collars, cuffs and front openings with the view to form the needed appearance, to keep their shape better, to reinforce materials and to make sewing easier. The materials for interlining should be resistant to long-term use or repeated washing, in terms of size, texture and wearable appearance. It is known that the thermoplastic resin used to adhere the

interlining cloths can contract through repeated cleaning. The Tochigi Consumer Affairs Center has investigated the actual status of interlining cloths used for business shirts available in the market, and verified whether they shrink in domestic washing or dry cleaning.

Results revealed that interlining cloths were found in collars, cuffs and front openings, and they are broadly classified into 3 types; non-adhesive, permanent or temporary adhesive interlinings. Significant material shrinkage was observed in the business shirts which were not processed to keep their shapes and used a permanent adhesive interlining, which indicates that appropriate care labeling is desirable.

Dishwashers

<Gunma Consumer Affairs Center>

Various types of dishwashers are available in the market. They are favored by consumers for reducing domestic workload, and saving water and energy. The Gunma Consumer Affairs Center implemented a comparative review of dishwashers from various manufacturers, and further, organized information included in the brochures of respective products for comparison.

Results revealed that the normal cycle may leave stains such as starch waste on the dishes even though the dishes look clean. To ensure a perfect wash, users should load about half the indicated maximum capacity in the heavy cycle.

Household paper shredders

<Central Community Plaza, Aichi Prefectural Government>

Paper shredders have conventionally been used by businesses. With the enforcement of the Act on the Protection of Personal Information in April 2005, they are becoming widely used in the household by consumers with privacy concerns. In view of this, the Central Community Plaza has conducted a study on paper shredders including labeling, performance, safety and usability.

The study revealed that 3 sample shredders might pose an entrapment risk to children's fingers. The sample household paper shredders were manual or automatic types, with test results showing some to have a shredding performance of 90% or less, or the actual power consumption differing from the declared value to an extent greater than the acceptable range of error ($\pm 20\%$).

Emergency supplies

<Kyoto Prefectural Consumer Life and Science Center>

With the rising recognition of disaster prevention, various emergency supplies are distributed by mail order or by internet. These products are typically sold in sets known as "emergency escape kits" or "emergency carry bags" which contain sanitary goods (e.g. plasters, mask), foods (drinking water, biscuits), flash lights and radios with charging functions, emergency candles, etc.

The Kyoto Prefectural Consumer Life and Science Center looked into the characteristics and instructions for use of the respective products and conducted a basic performance test focusing on the rechargeable flash lights and radios to explore their possible usage in times of disaster.

To charge a flashlight or radio of this kind, a user should turn, hold or shake the handgrip up and down. For flashlights, the operable duration was not fully in proportion to the duration of charging. In view of this, the center suggests that it would be efficient to charge them when needed with the lights on, and further, it advised to check ease of charging operation before purchasing the products.

IH cookers (electromagnetic cooking device) <Fukuoka Consumer Affairs Center>

An IH cooker is a device which induces an eddy current at the base of a metal pot to make the pot itself heat up. The eddy current is created by a magnetic field line which is generated when a high-frequency current is applied to a coil mounted underneath the cooking surface. Unlike gas cookers, there is no open flame, which prevents the possibility of burns or accidental fires. Meanwhile, the disadvantages of these cookers are; users must use electrically conductive pans, and there is no visual confirmation of pan heating. Also, there have been many inquiries relating to concerns about electromagnetic waves.

The Fukuoka Consumer Affairs Center has consequently conducted a test of table-top IH cookers to check their performance and safety operation capabilities (e.g. small object detection, automatic turn-off and boil-dry protection), measure electromagnetic emissions, and assess usability, etc.

All sample cookers fulfilled the small object detection function, however, one cooker raised the temperature of a stainless steel spoon placed in the center of a cooking surface to 92 degrees Celsius.

Also, in the boil-dry protection test, there was a sample which did not switch off for over 30 minutes when a small empty aluminum pan was placed on the cooking surface and heated at maximum power.