



On January 7, 2016, the Small Business Ombudsman released the Regulatory Robot, a new and innovative tool to help small businesses determine which consumer product safety rules apply to their product. While information about rules and regulations has been available for years in a piecemeal fashion, this is the first time it has been placed in proper context into one place on a government website.

Upon its release, the Robot received excellent reviews from the Chairman of the Commission (below) and the broader product safety community.



Elliot F. Kaye @ElliotKayeCPSC · Jan 7

This tool is a game-changer for product safety compliance. Credit to @CPSCSmallBiz for the great work!

CPSC Small Biz Ombud @CPSCSmallBiz

BREAKING: @CPSCSmallBiz is thrilled to rollout @USCPSC's new #RegulatoryRobot online tool. Try it now! business.cpsc.gov



CPSC Small Biz Ombud @CPSCSmallBiz · Jan 7

BREAKING: @CPSCSmallBiz is thrilled to rollout @USCPSC's new #RegulatoryRobot online tool. Try it now! business.cpsc.gov

New Regulatory Robot Tool Released: Enhanced Safety Guidance to Small Consumer Product Businesses on Compliance

New Regulatory Robot Tool Released: Enhanced Safety Guidance to Small Consumer Product Businesses on Compliance

by CPSC Blogger January 7

[Business Guidance](#) [Regulatory Robot](#) [small business](#)

We are excited to introduce the Regulatory Robot, an important new tool and a step forward in the way that the CPSC works with small businesses. The Robot helps companies determine which consumer product safety rules might apply to their product. The Robot asks small businesses making new products a series of guided interview questions, and, based on the answers, produces a downloadable report. The report is customized with links to product safety regulations that may apply to the product. The report also provides important information on labeling, certification, and testing requirements.

The Robot, working in concert with the agency's other efforts to educate small businesses, will increase the overall level of consumer product safety in the United States.

With the strong support of [Chairman Elliot F. Kaye](#) and the Commission, [Small Business Ombudsman Neal S. Cohen](#), and other agency staff developed this new tool for small businesses wishing to compete and bring safe consumer products to market.

"The CPSC is committed to using all available resources to protect consumers from unsafe and non-compliant products, and this new and innovative online tool is reflective of our commitment," said Chairman Kaye. "The Regulatory Robot is built for everyday small businessmen and women who need an easy and practical tool to help them stay in compliance with federal safety rules. It is far better to know and follow our rules *before* a product is made or imported, instead of us catching an unsafe product *after* the fact."

Why is this new tool noteworthy?

While information about CPSC rules and regulations has been available for years in a piecemeal fashion, this interactive tool is the first time it has been placed in proper context into one place on a government website.

The CPSC needs the cooperation and collaboration of small businesses to make sure that *all* consumer goods in the hands of American consumers are safe and compliant.

Why did the CPSC develop the Regulatory Robot?

Many small businesses seek assistance from our agency, through the Small Business Ombudsman and the Office of Compliance and Field Operations, and express a strong willingness to comply with our safety requirements – but they often cannot simply figure out *how* to do it. Prior to the Robot, we handled questions from small businesses through individualized phone calls to staff, an approach – that challenged our limited resources. Small businesses will now have *direct* access to these requirements – *and* the Small Business Ombudsman and Office of Compliance and Field Operations will continue to be available for additional questions.

We believe that the Robot will lead to safer, compliant products, fewer deaths and injuries to American consumers, and help us further meet our mission. We believe that the Robot offers an excellent 'safety' return on our investment, and we hope to see it evolve and grow further during the years with constructive user feedback.

Go ahead and [take the Regulatory Robot for a test drive](#). And please don't forget to [send us your feedback](#) so we can make it even better.



<http://onsafety.cpsc.gov/blog/2016/01/07/new-regulatory-robot-tool-released-enhanced-safety-guidance-to-small-consumer-product-businesses-on-compliance/>



Portfolio Media. Inc. | 860 Broadway, 6th Floor | New York, NY 10003 | www.law360.com
Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

CPSC Debuts Compliance Website To Guide Small Businesses

By **Sindhu Sundar**

Law360, New York (January 7, 2016, 10:04 PM ET) -- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission launched a website Thursday that for the first time would help small businesses compile a comprehensive list of safety regulations that apply to specific products by posing a questionnaire about their use, design and components.

The program, billed the Regulatory Robot, takes the user through a roughly 10- to 15-minute-long quiz containing more than a dozen questions about a specific product. It then generates a report outlining the safety rules, as well as labeling and testing requirements that apply to it, according to Neal Cohen, the agency's small business ombudsman.

"For the first time, the government is going to hold your hand and guide you through what might appear to be a maze of regulations," Cohen told reporters in a conference call Tuesday. "It's an additional tool to increase the efficiency of CPSC staff, because we're a small agency with a big mission."

Questions probe the user about the product's components, coatings and the age group of its intended audience. The agency states that the program contains "all of CPSC's requirements so that you do not overlook any safety requirements that may apply to your product," although the questionnaire itself carries the disclaimer that the report it generates should not be treated as legal advice or interpreted as an official decision by the agency.

Users would have to complete a new quiz for each product they are inquiring about, according to the website.

"While information about CPSC rules and regulations has been available for years in a piecemeal fashion, this interactive tool is the first time it has been placed in proper context into one place on a government website," the agency said in a blog post announcing the site Thursday.

Small businesses have traditionally sought advice on compliance-related questions by consulting the agency's compliance staff through telephone inquiries, according to Cohen, who said CPSC hopes that the quiz will also help sharpen companies' requests to the agency by posing more detailed questions about their products.

"We're not trying to minimize the role of our compliance officers," Cohen said on the call Tuesday. "The goal is also that this tool will provide a way for companies to be able to ask better questions."

The questionnaire also provides definitions along the way of regulatory term of art, explaining what the agency considers a "children's product" or an "art material," among other things.

Additionally, the quiz provides users with an option to provide feedback at the end, although Cohen said the agency was working on a way to incorporate the feedback tool earlier in the process to determine if users decide not to complete a quiz, and why.

--Editing by Catherine Sum.

All Content © 2003-2016, Portfolio Media, Inc.



Monday January 11, 2016

CPSC Debuts 'Regulatory Robot' to Guide Stakeholders on Requirements

CPSC's Small Business Ombudsman office January 7 launched an on-line service called Regulatory Robot. Available to the general public, the target audience is smaller companies, and the goal is to allow them to get focused reports on the regulatory requirements for their products. Small Business Ombudsman Neal Cohen told reporters January 5 that a hope is that users will be able to get basic understanding so they then come to his office or elsewhere at CPSC, like Compliance, with refined and specific questions on their situations.

It also will allow them anytime access to the information, he said, noting that those who run small businesses often do research and similar work late at night or during other off hours. A desired benefit for CPSC is less need to answer basic questions repetitively – Cohen acknowledged that part of a compliance officer's job is educating industry, but they have caseloads and other duties.

The URL for the service is business.cpsc.gov/robot. It takes the user through pages of questions and checkboxes aimed at targeting the products involved, including the types of components and intended uses. Cohen and Special Assistant for Small Business Will Cusey ran a demo for reporters, selecting random and seemingly incongruous options. Though funny, this also demonstrated that the system is intended to handle products that might be subject to multiple sections of CPSC's regulation such as a toy with a balloon component or a T-shirt sold as part of an art set.

A session starts with basics like a user agreement and a disclaimer that the results are not legal advice. It then helps the user decide if CPSC has jurisdiction. After that, it moves to determining broad product categories such as children's, wearing apparel, or art material. Eventually, the user may get to a list of about two dozen product types. Questions get more refined, targeting special considerations for particular items such as surface coating on toys or 15(j) provisions for seasonal holiday lights. Each page has a previous button allowing the user to change entries.

CPSC does not save entered information, and, indeed, the user does not enter identifying information but does have an option to title the report. The outcome is a downloadable PDF that bears a timestamp to account for changing requirements. Moreover, the report will identify if there are pending changes such as an in-the-works rulemaking.

The resulting report is divided into sections that cover the rules applicable to the product described. It also has universal information on issues like reporting duties or safety best practices. It includes links to pertinent information like cited sections of rules, voluntary standards, or guidances.

A session ends with an option to complete a feedback form. Cohen said he hopes that input will lead to baselines for the system's performance. He also suggested a possibility of eventually expanding the application, but he framed that idea as more of a potentiality than a likely occurrence. He quipped that the robot currently could be seen as a minimum viable product, which refers to early releasable iterations of a new product that might change based on customer use and input.

The report created by Cohen and Cusey was 10 pages, but it included many items selected for the demonstration. Most reports likely would be shorter. Cohen said the estimated completion time is about 10 minutes.

The application is built on a private sales force workflow platform that CPSC encountered with a contractor. The project includes OMB information-collection approval.

Regulatory Policy Online 'Robot' for Navigating CPSC Rules Debuts



BNA Snapshot, BNA.com, January 7, 2016

Development: CPSC unveils web-based tool for finding out what requirements a product must meet.

By *Martina Barash*

Jan. 7 — The CPSC is launching a new online tool to help small businesses determine which regulations apply to their products.

The “Regulatory Robot,” which went live Jan. 7, will be more efficient for small businesses than calling Consumer Product Safety Commission staff, CPSC Small Business Ombudsman Neal S. Cohen told reporters earlier.

And the program will allow them to sidestep the expense of hiring consultants or attorneys just to find out what requirements to meet, he said.

“It's sometimes hard to find information if you're not a CPSC insider,” Cohen said.

The initiative is also expected to save staff time at the ombudsman's office, eliminating some calls and making others more focused, he said.

Results are tailored to a user's input, Cohen and William Cusey, also in the ombudsman's office, said while demonstrating the algorithm tool at a Jan. 5 media preview. The “robot” asks a series of questions and follow-up questions, such as whether a children's toy is for children 12 years or younger. It then generates a report, using green text to indicate the user's choices. Cohen estimated the process takes 10 to 15 minutes for each product.

CPSC attorneys and Chairman Elliot Kaye helped create the tool, Cohen said.

Cohen called it “a revolution, in our small CPSC world, in how people can access information.” The tool is available at <https://business.cpsc.gov/robot/>.

CPSC Launches New Portal to Guide Companies through Regulatory Maze

Posted By [Matthew Cohen](#) on January 7th, 2016

Posted in [Children's Products](#), [Consumer Product Safety](#), [Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#), [Federal Regulations](#)



Has your business experienced difficulty identifying on the CPSC's website which product safety regulations are potentially applicable to your products? In an effort to better guide industry, particularly new product makers and small businesses, through the maze of CPSC regulatory requirements and guidance, the CPSC rolled out earlier today a new self-help compliance tool—the [Regulatory Robot](#) (“Robot”)—intended to do just that. Neal Cohen (no relation), the CPSC's Small Business Ombudsman, and the Small Business Education team, spearheaded the development and launch of the Robot with the support of the Commission.

Essentially, the Robot allows businesses and other product safety stakeholders, to input product information into the tool through a series of automated questions and then receive customized product safety regulatory guidance related specifically to that product. In addition to providing potentially applicable regulations, the report that is generated by the tool also provides other helpful, more general information on, for example, potential reporting obligations, the CPSC's saferproducts.gov database, and frequently asked questions concerning product safety regulations. Finally, once generated, the report is date and time stamped and available to users for download. The CPSC will not keep a record of the report or track who is using the tool.

The CPSC should be applauded for developing and launching this resource as it will help product safety stakeholders more readily identify and comply with applicable safety regulations.