HAZARD ANALYSIS & MANAGEMENT

Assessment Brief

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<th>Date</th>
<th>22 December 2015</th>
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<td>To</td>
<td>Jan Klaver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project title</td>
<td>Hoverboards</td>
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<td>TRACKIT project ID</td>
<td>58857</td>
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<tr>
<td>CH Record ID</td>
<td>CHR15/3550 – information about hoverboards</td>
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<td>CHR15/3430 – ‘Exploding’ hoverboard blamed for destroying Lafitte family’s home</td>
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PURPOSE

To provide an outline of issues associated with hoverboards and an update on actions taken to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Note the report
- Australian and international media reports continue to be monitored
- Complaints entered in the Clearinghouse continue to be monitored
- Prepare coaching notes and script for InfoCentre staff.

PRODUCT

Hoverboards are two-wheeled ride-on devices with a single axle. The rider stands on top of the board and controls the speed and direction of the device by subtly shifting weight. They have no brakes or handlebars and resemble motorised skateboards.

They are known by a number of different names - hoverboards / self-balancing scooters / gliders / modboards. For simplicity these products will be referred by their generic name - hoverboards.

There are several different brands on the market including Razor, Swagway, Hovertrax, Sky Walker, Kaiser – to name a few.
There are also several cheaper brands available mainly imported from China. All brands are available from online stores, group buying websites, eBay and some brands (Razor) are available in retail stores (JB Hi Fi, Woolworths, Harvey Norman) in Australia.

Prices range from less than $200 up to $2400.

BACKGROUND

The ACCC became aware of the safety issue associated with hoverboards when media articles reported fires which occurred when charging the hoverboard batteries. This issue appears to be associated with products at the lower end of the market. These incidents all occurred overseas.

The ACCC has identified two safety concerns with hoverboards:

- fires that have occurred overseas from the faulty design of some hoverboard chargers; hoverboards have an in-built battery that is charged by connection to a mains power source. Electrical safety experts advise that fires, as reported, most likely relate to products that would not comply with Australian electrical requirements, or by using a charger meant for another device;

- user injuries through falls. As controlling the hoverboards relies entirely on balance, falls from hoverboards are highly likely. The types of injuries that result from falls and crashes of hoverboards are similar to skateboard injuries - fractures, sprains, cuts, bruising, spinal injuries, head injuries and concussion.

There appears to be some wider inherent risks associated with the use of the products that road safety and transport regulators are addressing.

OTHER REGULATORS

- Electrical safety regulators

The Consumer Product Safety Branch wrote to all state and territory electrical safety regulators on 4 December 2015 - D15/185621
Subsequently, the Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (ERAC) published an information notice (D15/192644) providing guidance on what is required for electrical safety when using hoverboards or electric scooters. The bulletin notes that:

- the supply unit is classified as a high risk item and must be certified prior to being supplied in Australia
- some states require the supply unit to be registered with a responsible supplier.

Electrical Safety Victoria (ESV) emphasises the importance of using the electrical charger supplied with the advice. According to ESV, the chance of an overcharging incident can be minimised by using the correct approved charger, supplied with the product.

Battery chargers are declared electrical articles and must be approved prior to sale in Australia.

- Road safety and traffic regulators

State and territory road safety and traffic authorities have also been contacted to confirm whether hoverboards are considered to be vehicles and whether their use on roadways and public places is restricted.

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (DIRD) advises that hoverboards are most likely banned from use in public areas and pedestrian footpaths in NSW, ACT, VIC, SA and WA. (These jurisdictions do not have exemptions or definitions in legislation or regulations that cover hoverboards.)

In QLD, TAS and NT hoverboards are likely to fall within the definition of personal mobility devices and consequently it is likely that they can be used in public spaces and on footpaths.

MEDIA

Australian media reports note that hoverboards are the must-have toy and that they top the most-wanted present list this Christmas. In addition to highlighting the dangers associated with the product media reports warn of tough law restrictions applying to their use in some states (Herald Sun) - D15/185070. To date there have been no reports of fires associated with hoverboards in Australia.

International

Media reports from the United States report 10 fires in 9 states in USA – no report of injuries associated with fires. There have been 29 reports to hospital emergency departments in the USA (13 fractures; 6 strains; 2 contusions; 2 lacerations; 1 head / 3 ankle / 2 wrist or shoulder injury).

On 3 December The Australian reported that a regional UK newspaper reported that fire brigades in London and Buckinghamshire had attended fires caused by hoverboard battery packs or chargers overheating and having no safety cut-off function. A family in Kent suffered £25,000 ($51,483) of damage to their house after a hoverboard exploded in their kitchen.
In Hong Kong *The South China Morning Post* reported that a newly purchased hoverboard had burst into flames in a local public housing estate, leading to the evacuation of 150 residents.

Early in December *The Irish Times* reported that Irish authorities confiscated non-compliant hoverboards at Dublin port. UK authorities also confiscated hoverboards before they reached the market.

Each day there are between 2 - 5 articles in various media reporting on hoverboards. Many reports are repeating the earlier reports of fires and fall injuries and actions by authorities.

### CLEARINGHOUSE RECORDS

The Clearinghouse database has 2 reports of incidents involving hoverboards:

- CHR15/3430 — Original media report from Lafitte, Louisiana, USA — “Exploding’ hoverboard blamed for destroying Lafitte family’s home”

These 2 records have been assessed and finalised with no further action.

### RECALLS

- **Scooter Emporium—Self Balancing Scooter with Charger**
  - *PRA number:* 2015/15114
  - *Date published:* 21st December 2015

- **Catchoftheday.com.au Pty Ltd — AirWalk self-balancing scooter**
  - *PRA number:* 2015/15110
  - *Date published:* 21st December 2015

- **eBay Trader ‘Sello Products’ — Self-balancing 2 wheels electric scooter**
  - *PRA number:* 2015/15101
  - *Date published:* 18th December 2015

- **Hunter Sports – Moonwalker electric balancing scooter sold at Big W**
  - *PRA number:* 2015/15095
  - *Date published:* 15th December 2015

### ACTIONS TO DATE

- Hazard Assessment team assessed 2 Clearinghouse reports
- Recalls team prepared Executive brief for Commissioners
• Strategic Communications issued a media release warning of the hazards associated with hoverboards and providing guidelines for safe use – 10 December 2015

• A GovDex alert posted 4 December 2015

• GovDex alert updated 8 December 2015

• E.mail to ERAC and state and territory electrical safety regulators

• E.mail and telephone communications with DIRD and state and territory road safety and transport authorities.

ONGOING ACTION

• Targeting and Data Management team continue to monitor domestic and international media for reports of incidents associated with hoverboards

• Hazard Analysis team monitor reports to the Product Safety Inbox and to the Clearinghouse

SUMMARY

With the ongoing media attention to this product and the popularity as a Christmas gift this year, it is inevitable that the ACCC will receive a number of complaints in relation to hoverboards. These reports will predominantly relate to injuries from falls and consumer guarantee issues. The number of reports about recharging / overheating issues will be minimal as it appears that the major Australian retailers are aware of their obligations with regard to electrical safety and are taking steps to remove non-compliant products from the market.

Nevertheless, it is to be expected that cheaper brands sold in discount stores may result in reports about overheating and possible fires. Consumer Product Safety Branch staff is aware and conversant with the issues.

However, it may be necessary to provide guidance to the InfoCentre team so that they have the same level of awareness and readiness.