5.1. Product Safety Case Studies

5.1.1 Night Light

ESA was notified by a local distribution company about a fire involving a night light. These night lights were given out by the local distribution company as a promotional item for an energy conservation initiative.

ESA issued a product incident report (PIR) to the certification body (CB), and the manufacturer. The manufacturer couldn’t identify the root cause but mentioned that the primary designated engineer at the CB had uncovered three other cases with similar failure modes.

The standard provides specific construction and performance requirements for EL (Electroluminescent) Panel night lights (i.e. voltage surge, humidity conditioning followed by dielectric and leakage-current tests). The failure was determined to be an issue with the EL Panel material properties. However, the EL Panel manufacturer was no longer in business.

ESA directed the night light manufacturer to initiate a recall with corrective action and a communication plan. The recall is currently in a monitoring stage to evaluate the effectiveness of the established communication plan.
5.1.2 LED Light Strings

A large retailer informed ESA that they were halting sales on all LED light strings across all of its stores and issuing a voluntary recall of the products that were sold, explaining that the light strings did not meet the quality standards. The retailer stated that they “don’t have any reports of any safety issues related to the product”, but had heard of one incident in another city where the bulb came off and the wires were exposed. As the product bore a certification label, ESA requested additional information about the safety issue.

The CB found:

- The light strings’ designs and models were initially certified by the CB; however, the affected light strings produced and distributed were not manufactured in accordance with the Canadian Standard requirements. Therefore, the affected units were no longer eligible to bear the CB certification mark.
- The LED light strings may have exposed wiring directly upon removal from the packaging, posing a serious potential for a shock or fire hazard.

By contacting the manufacturer overseas, ESA learned that the same products were purchased by another retailer through a vendor from the same manufacturer.

According to Ontario Regulation 438/07, ESA issued corrective action letters to the manufacturer, the vendor, and both retailers; including a request for a communication plan to notify the public of this safety issue. Across Canada, approximately 330,000 total units were recalled by both retailers. Both recalls are currently in a monitoring stage to evaluate the effectiveness of the established communication plans.

To increase industry and public awareness, ESA’s product safety staff continues to engage in outreach activities. ESA continues to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to collect their feedback, to establish a consistent understanding of Reg. 438/07 and its reporting threshold, and to identify opportunities to improve and streamline its investigative process.