



## **Congresswoman Calls for New Safety Rules on Detergent**

**By Paula Bolyard**

**March 13, 2015**

Rep. Jackie Speier of California is proposing a bill directing the Consumer Product Safety Commission to issue new rules establishing safety standards for liquid detergent packets.

The Democrat Speier's bill, the Detergent Poisoning and Child Safety (PACS) Act, directs the CPSC to impose new regulations on the color, design, and contents of detergent packets.

The only confirmed child fatality linked to detergent packets occurred in Florida in 2013. Using population data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the child fatality rate associated with accidental laundry packet ingestion is about 1 in 73.9 million

For comparison, there is a 1 in 74.8 million chance an individual will be killed by an asteroid falling from space in a given year, according to data from the National Safety Council and National Academy of Science.

### **Using Common Sense**

Jeff Stier, senior fellow and head of the Risk Analysis Division at the National Center for Public Policy Research, says common sense on the part of the individual is a more effective safeguard than government regulation.

“If you have a toddler, you don't put this next to the Cheerios,” he said. “If you're a parent and you're concerned that you may not be able to keep these products away from your children unsupervised, I think you have a responsibility not to buy them.”

Stier says calls for new regulations are often prompted by alarmism.

“This is a big country, and occasionally something goes wrong,” Stier said. “And then you’ll get someone who contacts their member of Congress, and that member of Congress wants to do something to protect their community.”

### **No ‘Risk-Free Society’**

“We can’t live in a risk-free society,” he said. “There always needs to be a weighing of the risks and the benefits, and when you talk about the risks, they always seem to be exceedingly remote,” Stier said.

Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute’s Center for Constitutional Studies, says consumers, not government regulators, are better judges of products’ safety.

### **‘The First Lines of Defense’**

“Consumers are one of the first lines of defense for rejection of products that they think are not fit for their families,” he said. “The product has not been rejected by the parents of America.”

Olson says safety standards written by manufacturers may be more effective than rules issued by CPSC.

“You could potentially have very effective industry standards which could be adopted much faster than regulations, if you get the right people to agree,” Olson said.