Black & Decker Agrees To Pay $960K Penalty

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Consumer Product Safety Commission, the federal consumer watchdog agency, said Wednesday that Black & Decker agreed to pay a $960,000 civil penalty to settle allegations it knowingly failed to report some safety problems with its Grasshog XP Weed Trimmer/Edger.

In agreeing with the settlement, Black & Decker denies CPSC allegations that it knowingly violated the law.

Black & Decker was acquired by Stanley Works in 2010. The combined company is now called Stanley Black & Decker and is based in New Britain, Conn. The company's power tool division remains in Black & Decker's former headquarters, Towson, Md.

The CPSC says Black & Decker knew on or before May 2006 that its electric Grasshog XP GH1000, a hedge trimmer and edger that it started selling in November 2005 for about $70, was defective and could hurt people, but did not report this to the CPSC.

The commission staff said the trimmer/edgers' spool, spool cap and pieces of trimmer string could come loose during use and become projectiles. This meant users and bystanders could be cut. The trimmer/edger also could overheat and burn consumers, the CPSC said.

The company stopped selling the tool in the spring of 2007 and recalled it in July 2007, but by that time there were more than 700 reports of incidents, including 58 injuries with the tool.

It re-announced the recall in August 2009 when 100 more injuries were reported.

Product makers are required by federal law to report any safety defects and hazards they discover in their products within 24 hours.

The CPSC also alleges the company withheld information requested by CPSC staff during the course of an investigation.

Shares of Stanley Black & Decker rose $1.32, or 2.1 percent, to close at $64.69 Wednesday.

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