

October 20, 2020

Mr. Robert S. Adler
Acting Chairman
Consumer Product Safety Commission
4330 East West Highway
Bethesda, MD 20814
Dear Acting Chairman Adler

Dear Chairman Adler:

In September, an investigative report revealed that Amazon has disregarded consumer complaints regarding the safety of AmazonBasics products —Amazon’s private and popular budget label line—such as car chargers, surge protectors, paper shredders, microwaves, phone chargers, and batteries. In certain instances, these products have been linked to fires, explosions, smoking, melting, and physical harm to consumers and their property. In one specific case, “[p]hone chargers were said to have burned peoples’ hands and legs, and exploding batteries allegedly sprayed chemicals in someone’s face.”¹

In response, we wrote to Amazon asking for the recall of potentially hazardous AmazonBasics products. Our letter highlighted Amazon’s obligation, as the manufacturer and retailer of AmazonBasics products, to immediately stop selling any defective AmazonBasics products, notify consumers in possession of these products, and work with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to conduct swift and thorough recalls to remove these dangerous products from homes.²

Our letter posed a series of questions to Amazon seeking identification of those AmazonBasics products taken off the market due to defects or safety issues, and those recalled. Amazon responded that it has reported to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) a total of 31 products out of the 40 identified in the investigative report. But the CPSC has recalled only eight variations of two types of AmazonBasics products. That is an insufficient response

¹ Blake Ellis and Melanie Hicken, *Dozens of Amazon's own products have been reported as dangerous -- melting, exploding or even bursting into flames. Many are still on the market*, CNN (Sept. 10, 2020), https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/10/business/amazonbasics-electronics-fire-safetyinvs/index.html?utm_term=link&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twCNN&utm_content=2020-09-10T12%3A51%3A01.

² Letter from Senators Blumenthal, Markey, Menendez to Amazon CEO and Chairman Jeff Bezos, Sept. 11, 2020, <https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2020.09.11%20Letter%20to%20Amazon%20re%20AmazonBasics%20FINAL.pdf>.

given the safety hazards documented by consumers. The number of dangerous products remaining on the market raises serious cause for concern. Furthermore, Amazon appears to have deleted product pages in cases where consumers raised safety issues, removed their complaints from view, and avoided notifying consumers—who have a right to know what products pose a risk to their safety. It is critical that Amazon and the CPSC immediately identify for consumers any potentially hazardous items and ensure their removal from consumers' homes.


To better understand any outstanding risks to consumers posed by AmazonBasics products, we request answers to the following questions about Amazon's reporting to the CPSC:

1. How many times has Amazon reported AmazonBasics product issues to the CPSC? On what dates were these reports made and for which products?
2. According to Amazon, the company reported to the CPSC 31 of the products documented in the original CNN investigation, however, it appears that few, if any, of those products have been recalled. What investigation did the CPSC conduct into these reports, why did it fail to issue a recall based on these reports, and what has the CPSC told the public about these potentially unsafe products?
3. Does the CPSC consider unsafe any non-recalled AmazonBasics products that Amazon has reported to the CPSC?
4. How many consumer complaints has the CPSC received about AmazonBasics products? For which products and based on what consumer safety concerns or reported issues? Have those products been recalled?
5. Does the CPSC believe that it is sufficient for Amazon to remove potentially unsafe product listings from its online marketplace without notifying consumers or recalling the product, even if a recall has not occurred?

We appreciate your attention to this important consumer safety issue and request a response by November 20, 2020.

Sincerely,


RICHARD BLUMETHAL
United States Senate


EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senate