

## Scientists inspect rattles

# Testing protects infants

United Press International  
GAITHERSBURG, Md. — At a federal compound once used to protect the nation's capital from enemy missiles, researchers now work to guard infants against unsafe rattles, and everyone from hazardous toasters.

The facility is the Consumer Product Safety Commission's engineering laboratory. Each year it tests as many items as can be found in a department store catalogue.

"We like to consider ourselves the backbone of the commission," said William Wal-

ton, the CPSC's engineering director who oversees the lab. "We are also its technical integrity."

Over the past decade the CPSC has ordered 3,100 recalls involving 290 million product units. It has also imposed standards on countless other products designed to prevent injury and death.

The lab is housed in six stark cinderblock buildings on a rolling 8-acre site 20 miles from Washington, D.C.

Researchers opened shop in 1976, three years after the CPSC was created and several years after the compound was vacated

by its previous tenant, a Nike missile base.

Inside the buildings, engineers and technicians use technological wizardry and old-fashioned common sense to dissect, probe and explore everything from teddy bears and lawnmowers to coffee makers and 10-speed bicycles.

Their tools vary. They have Rube Goldberg-type contraptions, such as one with thread, tiny weights and a timing device, to test a material's flammability.

They have a bevy of calibrators, including one to gauge the sharpness of a toy truck.

Manuel Karlos spends his days in a brightly colored lab that looks like a small kindergarten classroom. He specializes in safety for children.

"There is an intrinsic reward for what we do," said Karlos. "We know we are protecting a

lot of people."

Many studies, however, are initiated after someone already has been hurt or even killed.

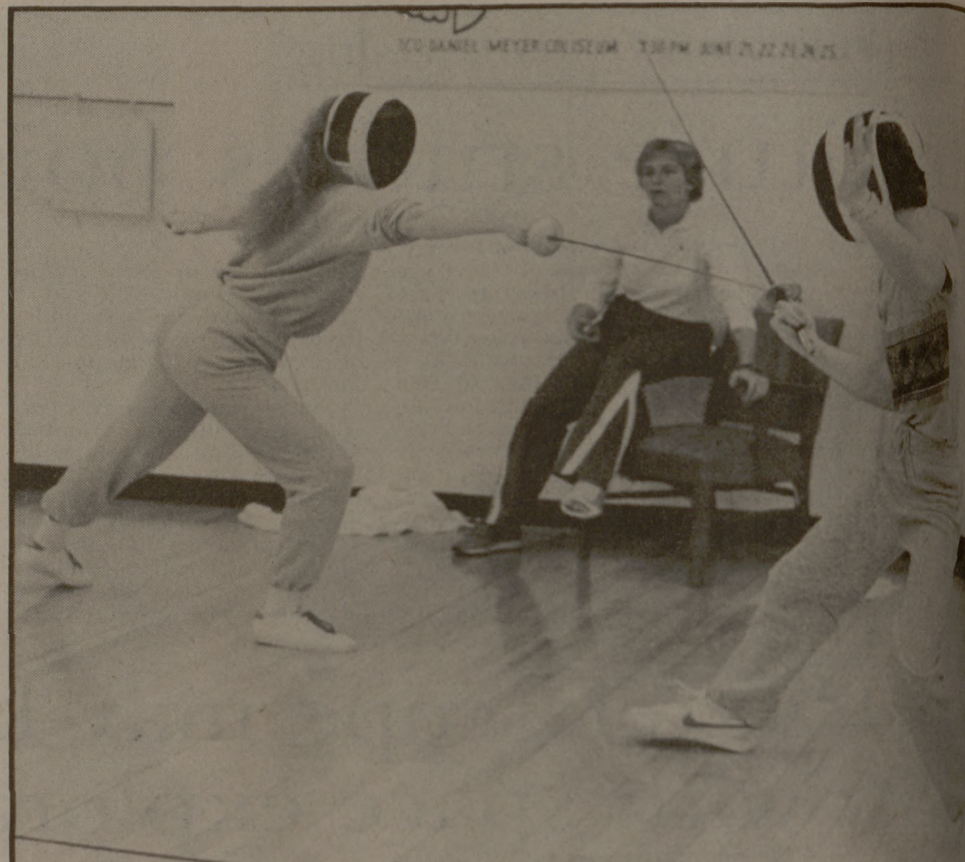
The lab examined a playpen in which a child suffocated. It concluded such playpens should carry labels warning against placing a youngster in the device if any of its four sides are down.

For more than a year the lab has been examining increasingly popular chain saws, trying to reduce the estimated 28,000 injuries a year attributed to the tools.

During the past two years the CPSC's staff has been cut by about a third as a result of White House budget cuts. The lab now has 23 people and an annual budget of \$1 million.

Lab director William West said motivation remains high despite budget cuts.

"There is a real sense of mission out here," he said.



Fencing for fun

Elizabeth Miller, left, a freshman from Dallas in environmental design, and sophomore Chuck Ulrich, right, a landscape architecture major from

Bryan, show off their fencing as instructor JoBeth Green watches in order to make needed corrections.

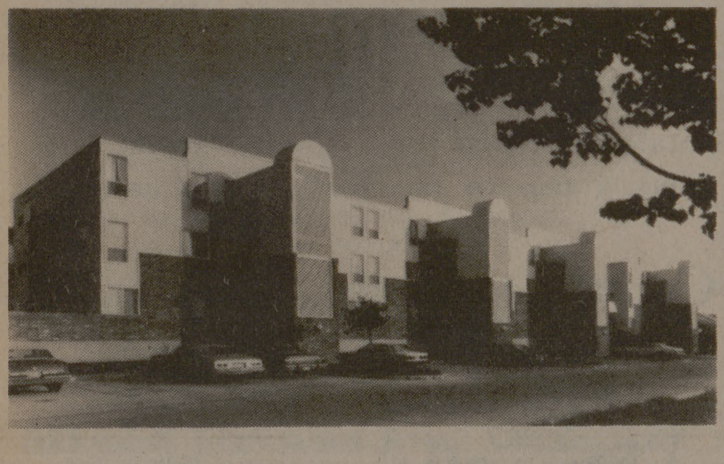
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## Navy Officers Get Responsibility Fast.

## Video games teach skills and strategy, prof says

United Press International  
SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Parents concerned about their youngsters spending hour upon hour playing Pac Man, Defender, Tron, or some other popular video game should relax, a Syracuse University communications expert says.

Children are better off playing video games than they are watching television, said George Comstock, author of "Television and Human Behavior."

"There's more to be concerned about violence on television and in films than there is about video games," said Com-

stock. "In video games, dealing with social conflict and rules, learning to play games better, is not such a bad thing."

"Granted there are other aspects, such as that they might develop problems or something, but you develop problems if you do too much of anything."

Comstock said he believes that zapping per-  
transfer over to every-  
havior."

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