

## Consumers' Interpretation of the Statement: "Do not leave [insert product here] unattended"

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### Abstract

Consumer's interpretation and understanding of the commonly encountered instruction/warning "do not leave unattended" with respect to three different types of consumer products were examined. Two hundred and eleven respondents were surveyed in the Los Angeles, CA area. The majority of the participants interpreted the phrase differently than how the warning designer intended. The results were also affected by the type of consumer product, for example: battery charger v. cooking appliance v. open flame. The results offer interesting insight into the varying understandings that consumers possess of statements similar to "do not leave [product] unattended" with respect to different types of consumer products. The consequences of the misunderstandings are significant if the warning designer's is relying upon the instruction to ensure the safety of the products and the end user. The results also highlight the necessity of using explicit and specific information when providing consumer instructions and warnings to ensure that the intent of the warning is adequately communicated and the importance of testing warning text to ensure product users understand the intended meaning of the warning.

*Lim, R. W. & Vigilante, W.J., Jr. (2010). Consumers' interpretation of the statement: "Do not leave [insert product here] unattended." In Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society 54th Annual Meeting (1841 – 1845). Santa Monica, CA: The Human Factors and Ergonomics Society.*