



# NCAC NEWS

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## ◇ *Consumer Affairs Climate*

### *Amendment of the Consumer Products Safety Law*

From summer to autumn 2006, there were a series of accidents caused by products resulting in serious damages suffered by consumers. These accidents included those triggered by gas flash water heaters resulting in carbon monoxide poisoning and those caused by home paper shredders whereby infants' fingers were cut off. The government delayed in providing prompt countermeasures regarding these accidents and information relating to these accidents was not appropriately passed on to consumers. An amendment to the Consumer Products Safety Law was accordingly implemented with the aim to prevent consumer damages becoming widespread by the means of promptly providing necessary information for consumers. The major points of the amendment are described below:

#### ○ Definition

Amongst accidents taking place when using consumer products, 'an accident caused by a product' indicates either of the following and yet was undeniably not caused by defect(s) of the product:

- an accident whereby a consumer suffered life-threatening hazards and/or injuries; or
- an accident that may cause hazards due to the product being lost or broken.

Amongst accidents caused by products, 'a serious accident caused by a product' defines that which involves serious hazards. To be more precise, an accident falling under one of the following is expected to be recognized by the amended law as 'a serious accident caused by a product':

- a fatal accident;
  - an accident resulting in injuries and/or illnesses that require medical treatment of thirty days or longer;
  - an accident whereby a consumer suffers from aftereffects;
  - an accident involving carbon monoxide poisoning; or
  - an accident that triggered fire.
- Duty to report regarding a serious accident caused by a product

The manufacturer or the importer of the product of concern must report to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (hereinafter called "METI") regarding the name of the product, details of the accident and other matters within ten days from the date when they learnt that a serious accident caused by the product took place.

#### ○ Official announcement of information regarding serious accidents caused by products

1. Accidents caused by instruments using gas or oil

Immediately after receiving the report from the business operator, the METI shall make an announcement at a press conference concerning the name of the business operator, the name of the product of concern and details of the accident and release the same information on its website.

## 2. Serious accidents caused by other consumer products

### ●If an accident is suspected of having been caused by a product

Immediately after receiving the report from the business operator, the METI shall require such a manufacturer or an importer of the product to take preventive steps. Furthermore, the METI shall make an announcement at a press conference concerning the name of the business operator, the name of the product model and/or type and details of the accident and release the same information on its website.

### ●If an accident remains unaccounted for as to whether or not it was caused by a product

The METI shall make an announcement by means of taking the following two steps:

- ① As a general rule, the METI shall release the following information on its website and make an announcement at a press conference regarding the outline of the accident within one week from the date when it received the report from the manufacturer or the importer of the product:
  - ⊙the common name of the product;
  - ⊙the outline of the accident;
  - ⊙the date of receiving the report; and
  - ⊙the date when the accident took place.
- ② The METI shall further continue its analysis regarding the accident and, if it suspects that the accident was caused by the product, the METI shall request the manufacturer or the importer of the product to take preventive steps. The METI shall then make an announcement at a press conference regarding the name of the business operator, the name of the product model and/or type and details of the accident and release the same information on its website.

### ●The METI's order toward business operators to improve their accident information handling systems

If the manufacturer or the importer of the product of concern fails to fulfill their obligation to report to the METI of Economy, Trade and Industry regarding a serious accident caused by the product, or if such a business operator makes a false report regarding the accident, the METI shall order the business operator to improve their accident information handling system which is necessary to collect, manage and provide information concerning the accident.

### ●Responsibilities of business operators

Retail dealers must collect information concerning an accident caused by a product and provide such information for consumers in an appropriate manner. Furthermore, retail dealers, repair service operators and installation and engineering service operators must notify the manufacturer or the importer of the product of concern when they have learnt that a serious accident caused by the product took place. Distributors must work together with the manufacturer or the importer of the product when they take steps to deal with the issue such as recalls.

The amendment bill containing the above points was presented to the 165th Diet and was passed on November 28, 2006. The amended law was issued on December 6, 2006 and will come into force from May 14, 2007.

### *Amendment of the Moneylending Control Law*

The consumer loan market, whereby consumers can borrow money without security or guarantee, has now expanded to the scale of approximately 14 trillion yen. Moreover, the number of consumers using consumer loans is said to have reached 14 million. 2 million of these consumers are considered to have suffered from 'multiple debts' as they have borrowed money from a multiple number of consumer loan operators. It is thus necessary to establish countermeasures to deal with these aggravating multiple debt problems.

The following areas are considered to be problematic backgrounds whereby consumers fall into multiple debts:

- a high level of interest rates applied for loans;
- an inappropriate loan is made possible by the means of ignoring the credit capacity of a borrower; and
- a borrower feels at ease in borrowing money without realizing the interest payment burden.

In order to solve these problems in a fundamental way, the necessity of amending the Moneylending Control Law was discussed.

The Moneylending Business Control Law sets forth regulations relating to registration systems and debt collection restrictions for consumer loan operators. It also specifies regulations regarding interest rates that exceed the capped interest rate set forth in the Interest Limitation Law but do not exceed the capped interest rate set forth in the Investment Law (so-called "gray-zone interest rates"). According to these regulations, if a debtor pays for the excess amount on a voluntary basis, such payment is considered to be effective under certain requirements (so-called "minashi-bensai" system).

The Moneylending Control Law, which was established in 1983, was originally amended in 1999 whereby loans with high interest rates provided by commercial money lenders and their violent debt collection methods became an object of public concern. In this 1999 amendment, new obligations were set forth including an obligation of document issuance for a guarantor. Nevertheless, in 2003, loans with high interest rates provided by malicious illegal money lenders (so-called "loan sharks") and their violent debt collection methods became an object of public concern. As a result, the law was amended in the same year in order to toughen registration systems, debt collection restrictions and penalties imposed on consumer loan operators and to invalidate any loan contracts involving an annual interest rate in excess of 109.5%.

The amendment implemented on this occasion, the following points have been put into practice in an attempt to provide fundamental and comprehensive countermeasures against aggravating multiple debt problems by taking into consideration the necessity of reviewing the structure of the loan industry:

- Equity required to initiate a loan business shall be increased to 50 million yen.
- Self-restriction functions of the Moneylenders Association shall be strengthened.
- Relentless debt collection activities conducted during the day time shall be controlled.
- Any insurance contract conclusions that enable a loan company to receive the insurance premium due to the borrower committing suicide shall be banned.
- A loan company shall be banned from acquiring a letter of attorney in order to have authentic documents prepared.
- Regarding a contract involving an interest rate in excess of the capped interest rate set forth in the Interest Limitation Law, authentic documents shall be banned from being prepared for such a contract.
- A system that designates credit information institutions shall be established.
- Any loans that bear a total debt balance in excess of the third of the annual income of a borrower shall be banned.
- Gray-zone interest rates and the minashi-bensai system shall be abolished.
- A loan company that has provided a loan with an interest rate that lies between the capped interest rate of the Interest Limitation Law and that of the Investment Law shall be subject to administrative penalties.
- The term of the prison sentence applicable to loan sharks shall be toughened to ten years.

In terms of the abolition of gray-zone interest rates and the minashi-bensai system described above, the Financial Service Agency and other governmental bodies begun discussing a review of these two matters when the following decision involving these matters had been handed down by the Supreme Court:

- ☆ By rigorously looking into a case involving the minashi-bensai system whereby a borrower was supposed to have paid for the gray-zone interest rate on a voluntary basis, the minashi-bensai system shall not apply if it is determined that the borrower was practically forced to pay for the rate.

Afterwards, the Financial Service Agency proposed an initial amendment bill which set a nine-year renewal period before abolishing both gray-zone interest rates and the minashi-bensai system. This bill attracted debate within the Diet as regards whether or not to pass the bill as it basically allowed gray-zone interest rates to be maintained during the proposed nine-year period. Nevertheless, in the

last result, the initial bill underwent alternations and a new amendment bill was presented to the 165th extraordinary Diet session. This new bill proposed an abolition of gray-zone interest rates and the minashi-bensai system within two years after the enactment of the law. The bill was passed on December 13, 2006 and issued on December 20, 2006.

◇ *Activities of the NCAC*

—Product Testing—

*Health food containing Asian ginseng as a main ingredient*

‘Health food’ containing Asian ginseng has been available over a long period of time. So-called “supplement” type products in the shapes of tablets or capsules have also been made available in recent years. On the other hand, there are reports questioning the safety of ‘health food’ containing Asian ginseng as pesticides were detected in some of such products. Furthermore, PIO-NET (Practical living Information Online NETwork) has received 1,497 cases of consumer inquiries and complaints involving ‘health food’ containing Asian ginseng within the period of approximately five years since 2001. 103 of these cases contained safety hazard related information such as the rapid rise in blood sugar levels or blood pressure and the development of diarrhea and nausea. NCAC consequently conducted the following tests on ‘health food’ products using Asian ginseng as a main ingredient:

- comparison with over-the-counter medicine concerning the amount of the active ingredient that produces physical effects; and
- product safety test.

The outline of the product test findings is described below:

○ Product test findings

- The amount of ginsenoside (the active ingredient of Asian ginseng) which was consumed when taking the testing health food products at the standard maximum daily intake significantly varied depending on each brand. In addition, the boundary dividing the tested products and medical products was discovered to be vague.
- Four out of all the tested brands contained pesticides in excess of 0.01ppm (an across-the-board standard value for pesticide residue allowed to be contained in processed food).
- Three brands adopting capsules and tablets caused indigestion to some extent.
- Approximately 10g of saccharide was consumed when taking some of the testing products at the standard maximum daily intake.
- Although a large number of the tested brands had product labels indicating the amount of Asian ginseng-derived ingredients, the quality of such ingredients were discovered to vary depending on each brand.
- There was significant difference discovered in the number of precaution labels between the grouping of extract and powder type products and the grouping of capsule and tablet type products.
- Although there were two brands that advertised ‘food with nutrient function claims’ (FNFC), their product labels regarding FNFC were discovered to be inappropriate.

○ Advice for consumers

- The amount of ginsenoside contained in each product significantly varies and some products could possibly be regarded as medical products.
- The amount of Asian ginseng-derived ingredients indicated on products does not necessarily correlate with the amount of the active ingredient.
- Excessive consumption of these products should be avoided as some of them contain a large amount of saccharide.

NCAC made requests to the industry and the government by taking into account the above product test findings. The details of these requests are described below:

○ Requests to the industry

- A definite standard should be established concerning basic ingredients and other matters in order to

provide high quality products.

- All products should have precaution labels warning that consuming a large amount of such products may be harmful.
- The amount of pesticide residue in basic ingredients and some products that are less soluble should be improved.

※These requests have been made to the Japan Health Food & Nutrition Food Association.

○ Requests to the government

- The industry should be given instructions to prepare guidelines for food containing Asian ginseng regarding product labels indicating the amount of the active ingredient and precautions.
- The industry should be given instructions to improve product labels provided by some FNFC product brands as they display inadequate labels regarding FNFC.
- The industry should be given instructions regarding some brands that provide products containing a large amount of ginsenoside that could be considered as medical products.
- The industry should be given instructions regarding the tolerable amount of pesticide residue allowed to be contained in products.

※These requests have been made to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

### *Take-out fried food*

Fried food that is often found in take-out food is prepared food containing large amounts of fat. Nevertheless, as this type of food tends not to provide adequate labeling, information relating to the amount of fat contained and the type of oil used in such food tends to be inadequate.

There are 300 cases of consumer inquiries and complaints registered in PIO-NET relating to fried food (from April 2001 to December 2006). 210 of these cases involve safety, sanitation and quality related issues such as the concern toward oxidization of oil and the development of nausea and diarrhea after consuming the food.

Under these circumstances, NCAC carried out product tests on common prepared fried food that can be seen in supermarkets with the focus on the following points:

- comparison with homemade fried food in order to discover the difference in the amount of fat consumed and the quality of the fat;
- the degree of oxidization of oil; and
- the number of products providing ingredient labels.

The outline of the product test findings is described below:

○ Product test findings

- The amount of fat contained in one meal of fatty take-out fried food was discovered to be equal to the standard daily fat intake.
- Take-out fried food had a larger amount of batter compared to that of homemade fried food and, as a result, a larger amount of fat could be consumed. Approximately 70% of fat consumed was the oil absorbed in the batter.
- Some tested pork loin cutlet was found to contain saturated fatty acids which are harmful when consumed in large amounts. The amount of saturated fatty acids in one meal of such cutlet was discovered to equal the standard daily fat intake. (This was especially so in pork loin cutlet provided by pork cutlet specialty shops.)
- On the other hand, most of the tested food products did not contain adequate amounts of n-3 fatty acids, which are desirable to be consumed in appropriate amounts to satisfy the demands of good diet. These food products did not contain enough levels of n-3 fatty acids to reach the standard daily intake for a healthy diet.
- Some tested food products contained trans fatty acids, which are said to increase the risk of heart disease if consumed. Nevertheless, the amount of such fatty acids contained was only a fifth of the standard capped intake set forth by the Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation on Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases.
- Take-out fried food had the tendency to contain larger amounts of salt compared to those of homemade fried food.
- The oil used to fry food became oxidized depending on which shop provided the food and which date

the food was sold.

- The type of oil used to fry food was mostly vegetable oil. The fried food provided by pork cutlet specialty shops, however, contained rather large amounts of saturated fatty acids. Furthermore, a maximum of 15 times difference was found in the amount of n-3 fatty acids contained in food depending on each shop brand.
- Food wrapped in containers had labels indicating information regarding added substances and allergies in accordance with the Food Sanitation Law. Nevertheless, only a small minority of such products provided information relating to basic ingredients and nutritional information.

○ Advice for consumers

- In order to prevent life-style related diseases, excessive intake of fat should be restricted. It is also necessary to take the opportunity to review the ways in which fat is consumed.
- Take-out fried food has a larger amount of batter compared to that of homemade fried food. Consequently, such food contains a larger amount of fat as the larger batter absorbs a larger amount of oil. It is thus recommended to select food with thinner batter.
- The quality of fat contained in take-out fried food varies such as food containing large amounts of saturated fatty acids and food from which n-3 fatty acids can hardly be consumed. When buying take-out food, it is desirable to consume fat in a well-balanced manner such as buying small amounts of fried food and using other foods in an effective way.
- Be aware that take-out fried food is often flavored and therefore an excess amount of salt can be consumed.

NCAC made requests to the industry and the government by taking into account the above product test findings. The details of these requests are described below:

○ Requests to the industry

- Take-out fried food is inclined to contain larger amounts of batter and fat. Health-friendly fatty food needs to be encouraged if possible as this type of food is quite common in general households.
- Basic ingredients, nutritional information and the type of oil used should be indicated in a label which takes into account health related concerns.
- Nutritional information should be indicated correctly in order that consumers are able to utilize the information when considering a well-balanced diet.
- The degree of oxidization of oil in some of the tested food exceeded the standard value set forth in the 'Sanitation rules for box lunches and prepared food' and the quality of such food should therefore be thoroughly controlled.

※ These requests have been made to the Japan Meal Replacement Association, the Japan Chain Store Association, the Japan Food Service Association and the Japan Franchise Association.

○ Requests to the government

- The degree of oxidization of oil used in some of the tested food exceeded the standard value set forth in the 'Sanitation rules for box lunches and prepared food.' The industry should therefore be given instructions to thoroughly control the quality of such food.
- Although seven out of all the tested food brands had labels indicating nutritional information, four of these contained information that intolerably contradicted the facts. The industry should therefore be given instructions to improve the contents of such labels.
- Although the Food Sanitation Law requires an ingredient label to be placed on prepared food which is prepared in the backyard of a supermarket and is wrapped in a container, the Law Concerning Standardization and Proper Labeling of Agricultural and Forestry Products (JAS law) does not require any label to be placed on such food. This is confusing for consumers and therefore the JAS law should make supermarket prepared food subject to the label placement obligation.
- Some tested food contained a small amount of trans fatty acids. A number of overseas countries have tough regulations regarding trans fatty acids such as restricting the amount of trans fatty acids allowed to be contained in processed food and imposing the label placement obligation on food containing trans fatty acids. It is thus necessary to investigate the amount of trans fatty acids that can be consumed from food currently available in Japan and to look into an establishment of regulations concerning this issue.

※ These requests have been made to the Cabinet Office Food Safety Commission, the Ministry of Health,

—Surveys and Studies—

*Consumers' concerns that came to light by analyzing the internet access status to NCAC's homepage*

NCAC's homepage provides a variety of information relating to consumer affairs and is utilized by a large number of people. It has become clear that, by analyzing the internet access status to the homepage, browsed pages are largely variable depending on what the current consumer issues are. NCAC accordingly attempted to make a generalized view regarding what kind of concerns users have based on the access status to the homepage within the time frame between January to November 2006. The findings are described below:

○ Overall access status

There were approximately 2 million pages accessed on the NCAC's homepage every month throughout 2006. It is considered that, due to the frequent updates and additions being carried out to the information posted in the past, a large number of people access the homepage and utilize it as an effective information source which is useful for their daily lives.

Top ranked pages according to the number of accesses are: 1) pages containing information relating to product recalls and/or free repair services, 2) pages containing information relating to local consumer centers located throughout Japan, 3) pages containing information relating to fictitious bills, and 4) pages introducing examples of consumer consultation cases. According to the above findings, it is clear that consumers access NCAC's homepage largely to learn about product recalls and/or free repair services or to look for a place for consumer consultations.

○ Trends in accesses to an individual theme

The number of accesses to browse pages containing information relating to product recalls and/or free repair services increased in the second half of 2006. This is due to the high incident of accidents taking place during this period involving familiar products and equipment such as paper shredders and elevators.

A monthly average of approximately 200,000 pages containing information relating to fictitious bills are browsed. In particular, a rapid increase in accesses is seen when precautions concerning a new type of crimes involving fictitious bills are released on the homepage and also after the media has released information regarding an arrest of a suspect relating to a crime involving fictitious bills.

Furthermore, the number of accesses to pages containing information relating to malicious housing renovation work resulting from door-to-door sales increases after the media has released information regarding an arrest of a trader relating to such a crime or a guilty verdict has been handed down to a trader. In this way, the number of accesses to pages containing information relating to current consumer issues inter-correlate with growing public concerns.

Pages containing information relating to the findings of product tests carried out by NCAC tend to attract accesses immediately after it has been released on the homepage.

○ Timing of accesses

In most cases, the number of accesses to each page jumps up when new information is posted and it steadily decreases afterwards.

On the other hand, when public concerns are dramatically growing toward a specific theme due to the media coverage of a crime or an accident, the number of accesses to pages containing the product test findings, surveys and analysis results carried out in the past increase in the short term as they relate to the crime or accident currently attracting public attention. A case example of this phenomenon is described below:

- New information was posted on the homepage regarding an accident involving a washing machine whereby a consumer's fingers were caught in its dewatering bin and were consequently cut off.

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- Accidents involving washing machines attracted public attention.

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- The page containing information titled 'a washing machine bouncing around when washing water

proof fabrics' which was released in the past on the homepage attracted a large number of accesses.

### *Consumer issues involving telemarketing targeting a senior age group*

Year by year, the number of telemarketing related consumer inquiries and complaints brought up by a senior age group, a group of people in their sixties and above, is ever increasing.

So-called 'baby boomers' are now retiring from work and consumer issues arising from contract conclusions as a consequence of telemarketing are expected to increase due to the expansion of the senior age group. Under these circumstances, NCAC provided information relating to telemarketing for consumers in order to prevent future problems taking place. The outline of the information provided is described below:

#### ○ The number of consumer consultation cases

The number of telemarketing related consumer consultation cases involving the senior age group in the Fiscal 2005 increased three times or larger compared with those in Fiscal 2000. The proportion of these particular consumer consultation cases has rapidly been increasing since the Fiscal 2000, accounting for 23.9% of the total consultation cases of overall telemarketing problems, while it accounted for only 8% of the total in the Fiscal 2000.

#### ○ Details of consumer consultation cases

Case examples relating to the top five products and/or services offered to consumers by means of telemarketing and the details of consumer consultation cases are described below:

##### ① Books

A consumer received a telemarketing call that offered a photo collection book of the Imperial family. Even though the consumer refused to purchase it, the book and a bill asking for the payment of 30,000 yen were sent to the consumer.

##### ② Fixed-line telephone services

A consumer received a telemarketing call that offered a change of telephone company. The consumer was told that the cost of a fixed-line telephone would be cheaper with the new company. The consumer refused to change the current telephone company as the details of the new company's services were difficult to understand. Nevertheless, a confirmation document regarding the telephone company change and a bill were sent to the consumer.

##### ③ Directories and lists

A consumer received a call from a company making directories. The consumer's company had a contract with this company regarding the publication of the company's executives' toji (thankful comments) in a directory. The consumer was told that he needed to pay for the cost of the deletion of his comment from the directory if he did not wish to continue the subscription of the directory. When the consumer was retiring from work, a letter asking for a future subscription was sent to him from this company. He then returned the letter to the company stating that he did not wish to continue the subscription. The consumer was not certain if he needed to pay for the cost of deletion as an individual even though his company concluded the contract with this company for both the name publication and the subscription of the directory.

##### ④ Health food

A consumer received a telemarketing call offering tea that would provide relief to lower back pain and decided to purchase the product as the price was reasonable at 4,800 yen. At a later date, the consumer received a document alongside the product. The consumer afterward received another call from the distributing company of the tea explaining how to fill in the document which had been sent to her. The consumer filled in the document as instructed and returned it to the company. Later on, the consumer received a call from the company once again and was told that the tea the consumer had purchased actually cost 100,000 yen. The consumer was surprised at such a tremendous difference in price from what was offered in the initial call.

##### ⑤ Commodities trading

A consumer received a telemarketing call offering a foreign exchange margin transaction. The consumer was told that Euro share prices would rise due to the holding of the Olympics. The consumer was even told that it would not be a dream to be able to buy a condominium in six months time if deciding to go ahead with the transaction. The consumer paid approximately 25 million yen for the



transaction as instructed. There were, however, no explanations provided for the consumer regarding any risks in such a transaction.

※The average contract sum involving commodities trading and shares tends to be fairly high. It can be agreed upon that these telemarketing traders focus on people receiving retirement allowances and pensions.

○ Problematic areas

Telemarketing traders rarely provide their sales aims to the consumer. They carry out relentless and forceful solicitation activities whereby consumers feel that it is difficult to refuse their offer. These traders are frequently able to provide false explanations as a telemarketing call is generally a surprise call and there is therefore only a small possibility that a consumer would tape the conversation. There are a considerable number of cases whereby no contract document was issued and thus problems arise afterwards between the consumer and the trader concerning discrepancies in the contract contents.

○ Advice for consumers

- Be strong in firmly refusing any offers provided by persisting telemarketing.
- Show a clear attitude of refusal against purchasing anything unnecessary.
- It is important to work out ways in order to avoid picking up telemarketing calls such as using incoming call number display services and/or voice mail functions. These enable you to decide whether or not you should pick up a call after looking at who is calling.
- Do not believe everything that a business operator explains to you.
- Seek other people's opinions such as your family members and/or people around you before concluding any contract. It is important to consider carefully as regards whether or not you really need the product and not to conclude a contract promptly.
- For problems involving telemarketing, a cooling-off system may apply within eight days after receiving the contract document for products and services that are controlled by law.
- Cancellation of a contract in other cases apart from those described above may still be possible depending on under what circumstances the contract was concluded. It is thus important to contact your nearest local consumer center.

*Consumer issues involving moving services*

Due to a large number of Japanese corporations and schools setting a fiscal year starting from April to March next year, a large number of people accordingly use moving services from March to April. Contents of such services have become more diversified in recent years and some of these services scarcely require the consumer's involvement in a series of moving tasks from packing to unpacking.

On the other hand, there are more than a few number of consumer complaints involving moving services with regard to loss and/or breakage of moving items, damage to the new house and a mover's poor handling of complaints. NCAC consequently sorted out and analyzed facts of consumer issues and problematic areas involving moving services. NCAC then provided information gained from the above survey for consumers. The major findings are described below:

○ The number of consumer consultation cases

Every year, roughly 2,000 consumer consultation cases relating to moving services are handled by local consumer centers. On a month by month basis, a significant number of consumer consultation cases take place in March and April, respectively. The proportion of the moving service related consumer consultation cases occurring during these two months alone accounts for approximately 20% of the total consumer consultation cases in a year. On a regional basis, the proportion of the moving service related consumer consultation cases taking place in the southern Kanto area alone (Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo and Kanagawa) accounts for approximately 45% of the total number of those taking place throughout Japan.

○ Details of consumer consultation cases

The most common consumer consultation cases are described below:

- Breach of promise such as a mover not arriving on the designated moving date
- Flaws on moving items and/or the house
- Loss of moving items

- Discrepancy between the quotation and the actual cost involving the amount of baggage or the price

Examples of consumer issues involving flaws on moving items and/or the house involve ranging from flaws on large size furniture and electric appliances to breakage of precision instruments including computers. There are other problems relating to moving services such as difference in service contents from those described in the advertisement and problems relating to incidental work services such as installing an air conditioner.

○ Advice for consumers

- Examine the quotation and contractual conditions carefully and obtain all the answers from the mover concerning any questions you have before concluding the contract.
- Make sure to hold a meeting or check things with the mover in advance in order to clarify where responsibilities lie concerning moving tasks.
- Let the mover know in advance as regards the items that require special care during the transportation (i.e. valuables and precision instruments). Such items should be confirmed by both parties. Furthermore, it is important to create backup copies of data in advance if wishing to have your computer transported.
- Ask the mover in advance concerning the cardboard boxes that they will bring in order to learn if any costs would occur for the boxes in the case of canceling the contract or how to handle the boxes after the moving tasks have completed.
- Obtain quotations from several different movers in order to conclude a contract with the one offering a reasonable quotation.
- Nevertheless, be aware that a mover offering cheaper prices does not necessarily mean that they will provide good work.
- Never neglect checking and inspecting until all moving tasks have completed.
- When the baggage is brought in, notify the mover immediately when noticing any damages that were done to the new house or if any items are missing (according to moving work contractual conditions, the responsibilities of the mover shall cease if the consumer did not notify the mover regarding any problems within three months after the baggage was delivered).
- Contact your nearest consumer center immediately when involved in any disagreement with a mover.

The National Consumer Affairs Center of Japan is an independent administrative agency for consumer protection affiliated to the Cabinet Office. The main activities are consumer education, consumer consultation, research and product testing.

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