

## Can Rules Become Laws?

*By Hap Hansen*

Soon, the season to be jolly. Soon, the season to be buying gifts for relatives and friends. Soon, the season we make sure those gifts we buy will be safe to use by the recipients.

Because many Americans sue somebody for any transgression, manufacturing companies have gone to great lengths to avoid product liability claims, even though many of those claims are groundless. Many people who sue know that companies may pay off, even if they have no liability, simple because it usually costs more to go to court than to pay the dollars accusers are asking for. There ought to be a law about what directions can be placed on a piece of merchandise. That law could stop some of the following examples:

- \*On a hair dryer – Do not use while sleeping.
- \*On an iron package – Do not iron clothes on body.
- \*On a kitchen knife – WARNING! Keep out of children.
- \*On a string of Christmas lights – For indoor or outdoor use only.
- \*On a food processor – not to be used for the other uses.
- \*On a chainsaw– Do not attempt to stop chain with your hand.

On other items you might want to use over the coming Holidays, there ought to be a law about these instructions:

On a bag of potato chips – You could be a winner, no purchase necessary, details inside package.

- \*On a bar of anti-bacterial soap – use like regular soap.
- \*On a frozen dinner – Defrost before eating.
- \*Printed on the bottom of a dessert– Do not turn upside down.
- \*On a bread pudding box – Product will be hot after heating.
- \*On an infant's cough medicine – Do not drive or operate machinery.
- \*On a sleep aide – May cause drowsiness.
- \*On a package of peanuts – WARNING, contains nuts.

Do we need a law to protect us from our own stupidity? Do manufacturers have to put warnings on basic products? Apparently so. Even with those obvious warnings, I doubt if frivolous lawsuits will diminish in number. So for a safe Holiday Season, just follow my simple rules:

- \*When you start your car, the engine will be running.
- \*When you take a walk at minus ten degrees, it will be cold.
- \*When you spill mustard on your cashmere sweater, it will leave a stain.
- \*When you drink ten Martinis, you will flunk the sobriety test.
- \*When you can't hear this story, you need hearing aids.
- \*Finally, there ought to be a law that says, "On this upcoming Holiday Season, be careful, be kind, be generous."