

Consumer Safety Alert- Laser Pointers

Study shows many laser pointers fail eye safety regulations

A recent study by researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) found that most laser pointers they tested did not comply with accepted eye safety standards.

Of the 122 laser pointers NIST randomly purchased on the internet, 90% of the green lasers and 44% of the red lasers were found to be unsuitable for use in a public setting such as a classroom, conference room, or home. Furthermore, most of the lasers found to be non-compliant were also labeled with the incorrect laser hazard "class", claiming to emit a lower laser power than that which was actually measured.

Another finding of the NIST study was that many of the green lasers also emitted invisible infrared radiation at levels that could damage the eye. This was primarily due to cheap construction.

Accidentally (or purposely) shining one of the laser pointers that fail eye safety standards into someone's eye could result in a serious eye injury. Follow these suggestions when buying and using a laser pointer:

- Do not buy lasers as toys or give them to children.
- Consider buying a laser pointer that emits a red beam instead one that emits a green beam.
- All lasers have a warning label that shows the laser "class". Consider buying a Class 2 laser pointer, instead of a Class 3 pointer.
- If you have a green laser pointer labeled as a Class 3A, Class IIIa, or Class 3R laser, consider replacing it with a red Class 2 pointer.
- Lasers that claim to pop balloons or burn materials are not safe to use as laser pointers.
- Never shine a laser pointer at your eye or towards a person, vehicle, mirror, or window.

More information about the NIST study can be found at <http://www.nist.gov/pml/div686/pointer-032013.cfm> . Contact the UD Laser Safety Officer (831-8475) if you have questions about this matter.