CPSC staff’s preliminary review also showed that the expected present value of the societal costs of blade contact injuries over the life of a table saw is substantial. Therefore, an effective performance-based table saw standard potentially could result in significant reductions in the injury costs associated with blade contact. However, current systems designed to address blade contact injuries on table saws appear to be costly and could substantially increase the retail cost of table saws, especially among the least expensive bench saws.

G. Existing Standards

The current U.S. voluntary consensus standard for table saws is the seventh edition of UL 987, Stationary and Fixed Electric Tools. Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (“UL”) published this standard in 1971, and has revised it several times. The original requirement for table saw guarding specified a complete guard that consisted of a hood, a spreader, and some type of anti-kickback device. The requirement further specified that the guard hood completely enclose the sides and top portion of the saw blade above the table and that the guard automatically adjust to the thickness of the workpiece. A blade guard that met this requirement was typically a hinged, rectangular piece of clear plastic.

The sixth edition of UL 987, published in January 2005, added design and performance requirements for a riving knife and performance requirements for anti-kickback devices. This revision essentially required new table saws to employ a permanent riving knife that was adjustable for all table saw operations. The requirement also allowed for riving knife/spreader combination units, where the riving knife could be used as the attachment point for a blade guard during through cuts. The effective date for the riving knife requirement is January 31, 2014, for
currently listed products, and January 31, 2008, for new products submitted for listing to the UL standard.

The current edition, the seventh edition of UL 987, published in November 2007, expanded the table saw guarding requirements to include descriptions of a new modular blade guard design developed by a joint venture of the leading table saw manufacturers. The revised standard specified that the blade guard shall consist not of a hood, but of a top-barrier guarding element and two side-barrier guarding elements. The new modular guard design was intended to be an improvement over traditional hood guard designs by providing better visibility, being easier to remove and install, and incorporating a permanent riving knife design. The revised standard also specified detailed design and performance requirements for the modular blade guard, riving knife, and anti-kickback device(s). The effective date for the new requirements was January 31, 2010.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA") currently has regulations on table saws used in the workplace, which are codified at 29 CFR 1910.213, Woodworking Machinery Requirements. The OSHA regulations require that table saws in the workplace include a blade guard, a spreader, and an anti-kickback device. 29 CFR 1910.213(c)(1)-(3). The OSHA regulations require the saw be guarded by a hood with certain performance standards including, among other things, requirements that the hood be strong enough to withstand certain pressures, be adjustable to the thickness of the material being cut, and be constructed in a way to protect the operator from flying splinters and broken saw teeth. 29 CFR 1910.213(c)(1). The OSHA regulations also require inspection and maintenance of woodworking machinery. For example, unsafe saws must be removed from service immediately, push sticks or push blocks