

CHILD SAFETY BLOG

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Researcher jailed over faked child safety tests for lighters

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You might think that “childproof” means just that; unfortunately, in the case of cigarette lighters, it may not mean much at all. A Florida researcher who conducted child safety tests on thousands of brands of cigarette lighters has been sentenced to eight months in prison plus eight months of home detention after admitting that she falsified test data and results for more than 11 years.

Karen Forcade, president of Youth Research Inc. (now-defunct), altered birth dates, sex and schools of study participants between March 1994 and August 2005 to meet Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines.

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She made these changes to her own data and to information collected by other companies she had hired to perform the tests. In one 1998 test she falsified data for 96 of 100 children tested. In another, she took the data for children who tested one set of lighters, changed their birthdates by as much as 5 years, and submitted the same data for a test of a different lighter.

Forcade's long-running scheme began to unravel after CPSC scientist spotted anomalies in test results, including similar handwriting on all parents' consent form signatures, misspellings of testers' names, and similar handwriting from purportedly different testers on data collection forms.

Forcade pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit fraud in January. In addition to the jail time and home detention, her sentence includes a \$10,000 fine and three years of supervised release.

Source: [St. Petersburg Times](#)

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