

Federal Toy Safety Standards Bring Confidence To Parents this Holiday Season

*Despite increase in safety, Safe Kids Coalition Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County
Urges parents to remain cautious this Holiday Season*

Coldwater, Michigan – The holiday season is here and for many kids that means one thing - toys. Approximately 50 percent of all toy purchases in the United States occur between the Friday after Thanksgiving and Christmas.

While parents are on a mad dash to scoop up the hottest toys, safety should be at the top of their wish lists. In 2010, an estimated 181,500 toy-related injuries in children ages 14 years and younger were treated in hospital emergency rooms across the United States. With the federal toy safety standards passed by Congress in 2008, parents can be reassured that the vast majority of toys on store shelves are safe.

“Right now parents and caregivers are in the middle of the country’s busiest toy-buying season, and the improved safety standards allow them to shop with more confidence than ever,” said Mary Proctor, Safe Kids Coalition coordinator. “However, it doesn’t mean we should throw caution to the wind. Shoppers should still make sure they are buying age-appropriate toys and following important toy safety guidelines. The Consumer Product Safety Commission should continue to monitor the marketplace to ensure that toys comply with these standards.”

Top tips for making sure children’s toys are safe during this holiday season are:

- Before shopping for toys, consider the child’s age, interest and skill level. A fun, but inappropriate toy for a particular child can be dangerous.
- Make sure toys intended for older children are stored separately from those for younger children.
- Children can choke on small toys and toy parts. Keep toys with small parts away from children under age 3, and check toys regularly for damage that could create small pieces that are choking hazards.
- Actively supervise children when they are playing with riding toys as well as any toy that has small parts, magnets, electrical or battery power, cords and strings, wheels or any other potential hazard. Active supervision means keeping the child in sight and in reach while paying undivided attention.
- Avoid letting children play with electronic devices that are only attended for adults such as key fobs, mini remote controls, watches, flameless candles, singing greeting cards, etc. Many of these items contain coin-sized button batteries, which can be deadly if ingested, and should be kept out of reach if battery compartments are not secure.
- Know the risks associated with children swallowing coin-sized button batteries and know which devices in your home contain these types of batteries. Go to the emergency room immediately if you suspect a child has swallowed a battery. For additional information, visit www.TheBatteryControlled.com.

To stay informed about harmful products in the marketplace, parents can go to www.recalls.gov and sign up for email alerts on recalled children’s products. “It’s too difficult to get your information piecemeal from TV or the newspaper,” adds Mary Proctor coalition coordinator, “so if you get the emails sent to you each time a recall happens, you’ll know right away which products to avoid.”

Safe Kids Coalition Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County reminds parents that most toys are safe, especially if you buy from a reputable retailer. “That doesn’t mean you have to go to a ‘big box’ store” Mary Proctor says. “But if you shop at a locally-owned toy store, make sure that the owner is aware and vigilant about getting recalled items off the shelves.”

If secondhand toys are purchased, or received from friends or relatives, Safe Kids Coalition Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph advises parents to visit www.cpsc.gov and make sure the toy hasn’t been recalled for safety reasons. Used toys should also be in good condition with all original parts and packaging, if possible. If a new toy comes with a product registration card, mail it in right away so the manufacturer can contact you if the item is ever recalled.

For more information about toy safety visit www.safekids.org or www.cpsc.gov

Safe Kids Coalition Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Our local Safe Kids Coalition is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Coalition Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County was founded in 2000 and is led by the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, your local health department. For more information about our lead agency and the services offered visit, www.bhsj.org.

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