2007: The Year of the Recall

Executive Summary

What a difference a year can make. Kids In Danger (KID) has been reporting on children’s product recalls since 2001. Each year, the statistics showed a steady average of around two children’s product recalls each week. Even that number surprised those covering the report: most parents and caregivers report hearing of only 3-4 recalls a year. But 2007, the Year of the Recall, as Consumer Reports Magazine named it, ripped the lid off of this urgent public safety hazard. With more than four recalls on average each week and over 46 million items recalled—including lead-contaminated toy trains, collapsing cribs and drug-tainted arts and crafts projects - consumers suddenly were confronted with the sorry state of the U.S. children’s product safety system.

During 2007, there were 448 recalls, and 231 or 52% of those were for children’s products. This percentage is up from last year as more attention was focused on lead in toys and other children’s product hazards. The majority of children’s product recalls were for children’s toys. 2007 saw over 100 recalls due to excessive levels of lead in nursery items, toys, jewelry, and art supplies.

Other findings in this report include:

- 2007 saw the largest crib recall in history, one million Simplicity and Graco cribs. Three deaths were included in the recall announcement, more came to light later.
- Magnetix magnetic building sets that led to the death of a child from internal injuries after swallowing the tiny magnets were recalled again this year. There were 1500 other reports and 28 injuries prior to this second recall.
- Seventeen percent of the recalls took place after a child had been injured or killed. For nursery products, 48% of the recalls were preceded by injuries or death and for sporting goods, 53% of the recalls involved injuries.
- In all, these recalls involved 657 injuries, an increase of 374% from last year. Considering that the lead recalls (109 of the 231 recalls) involved no injuries, that is a particularly disturbing trend.
- In 2007, 12 children’s product recalls involved one million or more units.
- Operating without a quorum for much of the year, CPSC did little to strengthen rules, assess fines, or bring strong leadership to the issue of product safety. Congress instead took the lead, crafting legislation to increase funding as well as strengthening CPSC’s role in keeping dangerous products off the shelves.

KID concludes these findings with suggestions for parents and caregivers including: checking www.cpsc.gov for recall reports, spreading the word to family and friends, and keeping updated with www.KidsInDanger.org for the latest updates. The full recall report is available for download at www.KidsInDanger.org or by calling KID at 312.595.0649.