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The Year of the Nursery Product Recall: Nursery and sleep environment products pose a serious threat; CPSC sharpens its teeth

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(CHICAGO) Nursery product recalls made history in 2009 as the most-recalled children's product type for the first time. But this is not good news for the millions of parents and children who count on the products they use being safe, such as high chairs, infant carriers, strollers, and cribs. Children's clothing recalls also reached an unexpected high in 2009, as drawstrings posed strangulation hazards.

Kids In Danger, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children's product safety, released with U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (IL-9) and Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, *The Year of the Nursery Product Recall*, an annual study of recalled children's products.

The report found that children's product recalls decreased slightly in 2009, but the total of 143 recalls is still higher than any year prior to 2007. Recalls in 2009 totaled over 21.1 million units, including six recalls that involved 1 million or more units.

"These products together caused at least 198 injuries and 9 deaths," stated Nancy Cowles, executive director of Kids In Danger. "And those incidents include only those already reported at the time of the recall. More needs to be done to protect children from these hazards."

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Additional findings of the report include:

- Nursery products and clothing surpassed toys as the product types with the most recalls, representing 28% and 27% of children's product recalls respectively. Nursery products were recalled mainly due to entrapment, fall, and choking hazards, while clothing was recalled due to strangulation hazards with drawstrings and choking hazards from small detachable parts.
- The largest recall was for 4 million units of Aqua-Leisure inflatable baby floats with leg straps that can tear, causing a baby to fall into the water and risk drowning. Stork Craft's recall of Drop-Side Cribs due to entrapment and fall hazards involved 2.1 million units.
- Fifteen manufacturers had more than one product recalled in 2009. Dorel Juvenile Group and Evenflo Co. Inc. had five separate product recalls each.
- Two recalls, Wooden Play Sets by Adventure Playsets and Rainforest Play Yards by Simplicity Inc., received over 1,000 incident reports before being recalled. Evenflo's Envision High Chairs were responsible for 54 injuries before recall.
- Twenty sleep environment products were recalled in 2009, totaling over 4.7 million units, nearly 2,000 reported incidents, and 75 injuries and deaths.
- Seven of the nine deaths occurred in sleep environment products, with five deaths in drop-side cribs and two in baby hammocks. A ban on the drop-side crib design is under consideration due to this significant danger.
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) imposed fines on 34 companies who violated safety regulations for children's products, totaling over \$30.7 million in fines. Most penalties were due to violations for drawstrings in children's clothing and excessive lead paint in children's toys.

“The new mandatory standards for infant and toddler durable products called for in the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act passed in 2008 can't come fast enough,” added Cowles. “For too long, consumers have been at the mercy of industry driven standards for nursery products and the result are the recalls you see here today.”

KID recommends:

- CPSC should continue developing the public database required by the CPSIA in order to give consumers more information about potential hazards.

- Congress should require annual reports on recalls and their effectiveness.
- CPSC should require more aggressive outreach by companies following a recall, and require a replacement product or refund, especially in sleep environment recalls.

US Representative Jan Schakowsky (IL 9) expressed her continued support for strong children's product safety laws. "Once again, KID's recall report shows that too many children are still being harmed by dangerous products," stated Schakowsky. "As in past years, the report and the efforts of groups like KID will help guide the public, state and federal agencies, and policymakers like me in what steps must be taken in order to keep our children safe."

"While we have seen progress after more than two decades of advocacy on behalf of America's littlest consumers, these high profile recalls demonstrate more must be done," said Brian Imus, state Director with Illinois PIRG. "Parents and other consumers shouldn't have to rely on after-the-fact recalls to make sure the products on store shelves and in their homes are safe."

"This Kids In Danger report highlights the need for all of us to continue our work at the state and federal level to protect children from dangerous products," said Attorney General Madigan. "With new leadership at the CPSC, we are making strides to improve the product safety information available to parents and to require greater accountability for product manufacturers. I commend Nancy Cowles and Kids in Danger for their continued leadership in this area.

KID recommends that parents check the products used with their children at www.cpsc.gov and sign up for safety updates at www.KidsinDanger.org. In addition, parents should report problems with a product both to the manufacturer and to CPSC, and urge elected representatives to push for better regulation of children's products.

More information about Kids In Danger and dangerous juvenile products is available at (312) 595-0649 or www.KidsInDanger.org

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