



# False Sense of Security:

Recall Histories of Leading Children's  
Product Manufacturers 1993-2003

September 2003

**Kolcraft**®



**Fisher-Price**®

**GRACO**®

**PLAYSKOOL**®



**evenflo**®

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March 1993 - April 2003

## Executive Summary

Many parents and caregivers purchase nursery products based on a brand name, trusting that a recognizable logo indicates a high quality, safe product. However, this trust might be misplaced. Each year, over 67,000 children are sent to hospital emergency rooms and treated for injuries from children's products, many of them manufactured by top name brands. In response to potential dangers hidden behind brand-name labels, Kids In Danger (KID) published *A False Sense of Security* and examined the recall records of leading children's product manufacturers during the last decade.

KID collected data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). Figures include recalls posted by the CPSC from March 1993 to April 2003. The report focuses solely on children's products. The statistics address neither clothing nor toys.

Findings of this report include:

- Within the last decade, the children's product industry has recalled almost 60 million units.
- Cosco and Graco led the industry with the most recalled products. Both of these manufacturers recalled an average of over one product per year.
- Ten products broke, malfunctioned or failed more than 400 times before they were recalled. Both Cosco's Two Ways Tandem Stroller and Kolcraft's car seat each had 3,000 reported failures before they were recalled.
- In the past decade, juvenile products that were later recalled caused over 3,000 known injuries. Recalled children's products manufactured by Graco, Century and Cosco were linked to hundreds of reported injuries. Graco's recalled products caused 731 injuries, the highest posted by any manufacturer.
- In the past ten years recalled products have caused 31 deaths before they were recalled, and an additional 8 known deaths after being recalled. Graco's products have been linked to 11 deaths and Kolcraft's products to 7 deaths.

Based on this report, Kids in Danger recommends that:

- To ensure safer products, independent safety testing for all durable infant and toddler products must be mandatory. All products must be tested to stringent standards before they are placed on market shelves.
- Once a product has been recalled, manufacturers need to take proactive measures in the recall process, including the use of targeted communication to likely product consumers.

## Introduction

Playskool, Cosco, Kolcraft: they are well-known brand names, depended on by parents for quality and safety. Parents and caregivers often assume that dangers lie in old, handed-down “off-brand” products. However, the frequency of recalls, injuries and deaths caused by brand name products proves that popular manufacturers are by no means exempt from safety concerns. By examining the safety records of well-known children’s product manufacturers, this report demonstrates that dangers lurk behind even trusted labels.

**In 2002, over 67,000 children were rushed to emergency rooms due to injuries associated with children’s products.**

Many popular children’s product manufacturers entice parents with promises of safety and quality. For example, Safety 1<sup>st</sup> directly implies the safety of their products in their brand name. Yet one of their products, the *Bouncing Buggy*, broke in 700 separate incidents. Similarly, many manufacturers claim high quality products with their slogans. For instance, Graco promises “innovative, quality baby and children’s products.” Evenflo suggests it provides the “World’s Best Baby Care.” Evidently, manufacturers are working hard to gain the trust of the consumer, yet this report reinforces the old adage, “buyer beware.”

*A False Sense of Security* focuses solely on children’s products. The statistics address neither clothing nor toys. Children’s products - also called juvenile or nursery products - are defined as products used in the care of a child and include items such as cribs, strollers, highchairs, infant carriers and playpens.

## The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Information for this report was gathered from press releases issued jointly by children’s product manufacturers and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). The CPSC was established by the Consumer Product Safety Act in 1972 as an independent regulatory agency; operations began in 1973. In the Consumer Product Safety Act, Congress directed the CPSC to protect the public “against unreasonable risk of injuries associated with consumer products.”

Despite the important task of consumer protection, the CPSC operates with extremely limited resources. The CPSC regulates children’s products primarily through product recalls. Although important in the struggle to protect children, recalls only occur after products fail.

**A note about findings in *A False Sense of Security*:**

Although popular manufacturers frequent the tables in this report, this study includes both well-known and lesser-known children’s product manufacturers; all of the collected data can be found in the appendix.

**Children’s product recalls**

When reviewing manufacturers’ histories over the past decade, KID discovered name-brand manufacturers led the industry in recalled children’s products.

Between March 1993 and April 2003, 9 well-known manufacturers recalled 6 or more products. Brand names such as Cosco and Graco each averaged over one recall per year.

**Table 1: Product Recalls by Manufacturer<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Manufacturer</b>	<b>Juvenile Recalls</b>
Cosco	13
Graco	12
Fisher Price	9
Safety 1st	9
Evenflo	8
Gerry	7
Kolcraft	7
Playskool	7
Century	6

**Even failures without injuries indicate danger**

Since many children’s products are not tested for safety prior to sale, products often malfunction, break, or fail, potentially endangering the child them. Even if a product has not yet caused known injuries, failures can be indications that a product is unsafe and needs to be recalled by the CPSC.

Surprisingly, products fail many, sometimes thousands of times before they are recalled. Since 1993, ten such products had over 400 failures prior to their recalls. KID found products made by Cosco, Kolcraft and Century with the highest numbers of reported failures.

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<sup>1</sup> Playskool’s totals only account for products manufactured by Hasbro, Playskool’s parent company. Other children’s product manufacturers like Kolcraft, XL Machine Ltd. and Safety 1st manufacture many products sold under the Playskool brand. We indicate this licensing partnership in our tables by placing Playskool in parentheses. For instance, Kolcraft (Playskool) means the product label said “Playskool” even though it was manufactured by Kolcraft. Later in the report, this issue is discussed in detail.

**Table 2: Reported failures for specific products prior to recall<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Manufacturer</b>	<b>Failures</b>
Two Ways Tandem Stroller	Cosco	3,000
Car Seat	Kolcraft	3,000
Infant Carrier	Century	2,700
TravelLite SPORT Stroller	Century	1,400
Crib	Simmons Juvenile	800
Bouncing Buggy	Safety 1st	700
Take 2: Multi-Use Stroller	Century	681
Playpen	Cosco	421
Infant Carrier/Car Seat	Cosco	416
Graduate Booster Seats	Kids II	400

### **Manufacturers responsible for numerous injuries**

In addition to reported failures, the CPSC relies on reported injuries when deciding to recall a children's product. Since 1993, brand-name children's product manufacturers led the industry for the number of injuries caused by their recalled products.

The products manufactured by nine of these companies were linked to at least 80 reported injuries in the last decade. Graco recalled products caused 731 injuries, the highest number posted by any company.

**Table 3: Reported Injuries by Manufacturer**

<b>Company</b>	<b>Injuries linked to products</b>
Graco	731
Century	530
Cosco	369
Evenflo	333
Fisher Price	235
Playskool	121
Safety 1st	116
Kolcraft	80

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<sup>2</sup> Our study can only include *reported* failures and injuries. We could not estimate unreported failures and injuries, but assume these figures to be high.

## Hundreds of injuries for certain products

Similar to the statistics on failures previously outlined, some children's products can cause hundreds of injuries before they are recalled. Since 1993, products recalled by brand-name manufacturers account for some of the highest injury numbers in the industry.

**Table 4: Reported injuries for specific products prior to recall**

Product	Manufacturer	Hazard	Injuries
Seat Rings on Stationary Entertainer	Graco	cut, scratch	400
Take 2 Multi-Use Stroller	Century	fall	250
Two Ways Tandem Stroller	Cosco	collapse, fall	200
Infant Swing	Graco	strangulation, fall	181

## Companies Whose Recalled Products are Deadly

Some juvenile products are not only harmful, but deadly. Graco's ten year recall record posts the highest number of reported deaths from their recalled products: 11 children. Unfortunately, Kolcraft, Century and Baby Trend are not far behind, each responsible for at least five deaths over the last decade.

**Table 5: Fatalities caused by recalled products by manufacturer**

Manufacturer	Deaths
Graco	11
Kolcraft	7
Century	5
Baby Trend	5
Cosco	3
Evenflo	3

## Recalled children's products that kill

Alarming, several products listed below claimed two or more lives before being recalled. Manufacturers with more than one deadly product include Graco, Kolcraft, Century and Cosco. Except as noted, all deaths took place before the products were recalled. KID noticed that products falling into the category of *playpens and portable cribs* account for 23 of the 38 deaths (60%).

**Table 6: Deaths associated with specific recalled children’s products**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Manufacturer</b>	<b># of Units</b>	<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
Infant Swing	Graco	7,000,000	strangulation, fall	6
Travel-Lite Portable Crib	Kolcraft (Playskool) <sup>3</sup>	11,600	suffocation	6 (with 3 deaths after recall) <sup>4</sup>
Playpen	Graco	2,000,000	strangulation	5
Home and Roam Playpen	Baby Trend	100,000	collapse	5 (with 3 deaths after recall) <sup>5</sup>
Lil' Napper Infant Swing	Century	125,000	strangulation	5 (with 2 deaths after recall)
Happy Camper Playpen	Evenflo	1,200,000	suffocation	3
Playpen	Bilt-Rite	409,000	strangulation	1
Fold-N-Go Playpen	Century	212,000	collapse, suffocation	1
Crib Mattress	Cosco	62,000	entrapment	1
Full-size Crib	Cosco	390,000	entrapment	1
Playpen	Cosco	102,000	entrapment	1
Deluxe Baby Monitor	Gerry	990,000	ignition	1
Playpen	Kolcraft (Playskool)	2,600,000	strangulation	1
Le Cradle Bassinet	Kids Line Inc	46,000	suffocation	1
Crib Side Rail	Okla Homer Smith	278,000	entrapment	1

<sup>3</sup> Here is an example of a product sold under the Playskool brand name, but manufactured by Kolcraft.

<sup>4 and 5</sup> This is the number of deaths associated with the product as of 6/2003.

## Conclusion

*A False Sense of Security* demonstrates that many children's products - whether made by a small manufacturer or a popular name brand - cannot be consistently depended on for safety. Kids in Danger finds the following unacceptable:

- The number of units recalled by children's product manufacturers since 1993: about 60 million
- The number of reported child injuries associated with these recalled products: over 3,000
- The reported number of reported deaths since 1993 linked to these recalled products: 39

To reduce these shocking figures, Kids in Danger recommends that all children's products undergo independent safety testing according to stringent standards before being placed on the market. In conjunction with safety testing, manufacturers must be required to certify that their products have been tested and meet mandatory safety standards set by the U.S. government.

In addition, if products are deemed unsafe after they are sold, manufacturers must take more proactive measures in the recall process. KID suggests including the use of targeted communication, i.e. advertisements, TV and radio commercials and mail flyers to likely product consumers.

Until these or similar measures are taken, parents cannot assume the safety of any given children's product. As shown in this report, a popular logo does not indicate safety. As a result, parents must exercise extreme caution when purchasing products for their children. Parents should continue to check the safety of their products through the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) at 1-800-638-2772 or [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). Parents can also stay up-to-date on future recalls by receiving monthly email alerts of recalled products from Kids In Danger, or directly from the CPSC's web site. Consumers can visit [www.kidsindanger.org](http://www.kidsindanger.org) to find out more about dangerous children's products.