
Playing With Poison

*Lead Poisoning Hazards of Children's Product Recalls
1990 - 2004*

August 2004

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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

Lisa Madigan
ATTORNEY GENERAL

As Attorney General, I work each day to make our communities safer for children – communities in which parents feel confident that their kids are safe from school violence, sex offenders, and even online predators. However, children also face an equally serious threat from a less obvious culprit: lead.

In response to the dangers posed to children, we have banned lead-based paint from housing and removed accessible lead from consumer products. Sadly, lead poisoning continues to compromise the health and safety of far too many children in Illinois.

As recently as 2003, a child suffered severe lead poisoning after swallowing a necklace pendant from a vending machine. Cases such as these have prompted recalls of millions of children's toys and trinkets nationwide. And although product recalls remain an important tool in protecting consumers from dangerous products, far too often recalls begin only after someone has suffered serious harm.

Just as parents should be able to feel confident in their children's safety when sending them to school, it is important that they are confident in the safety of their children's toys and clothing. Our goal must be to ensure that products intended for children are free of lead before they appear on the market.

Playing With Poison: Lead Poisoning Hazards of Children's Product Recalls 1990-2004 will help us reach that goal. *Playing With Poison* provides important information about the causes of lead poisoning and its harmful effects on children; ways to protect our families from lead; details on children's products recalled for lead; and recommendations to help keep products with lead from ever reaching our kids.

I commend Kids In Danger for its important work on this issue. We can and must do a better job of keeping our children safe from lead poisoning and its harmful effects.

Playing With Poison provides us with the research and recommendations necessary to do just that. I hope you will join us in our efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Madigan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Madigan
Illinois Attorney General

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Forward to *Playing With Poison*
U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky
Ranking Democrat, Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee

August 25, 2004

As a mother and a grandmother, I am well acquainted with the persuasive powers of young children. They beg and plead, sometimes scream and stomp, because they must have that shiny necklace or ring, that sidewalk chalk, or that box of crayons – immediately, right now – as if their life depended on it.

As a matter of fact, their life does depend on it.

What parents do not know is that some of these toys that our children cannot live without contain high levels of lead, a dangerous substance that can threaten their future and jeopardize their young lives. Lead, even in small amounts, can cause irreversible neurological damage, delayed physical and mental development, and attention and learning problems to children who are exposed to it.

The federal government recently recalled 150 million vending machine toys – rings and necklaces that sell for fifty cents or a dollar apiece. But in 21st Century America, these toys, and others laced with lead, should never have been allowed to reach the hands of children and enter the homes of unsuspecting parents.

The Kids-in-Danger report sheds the light on a serious health crisis that is facing our nation today. *Playing With Poison: Lead Poisoning Hazards of Children's Product Recalls 1990-2004* is an eye-opening critical study of what our children and parents are facing today and it offers a clear set of recommendations that will help us eliminate this dangerous and deadly threat.

As the lead Democrat on the Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection Subcommittee, I have called on the Consumer Product Safety Commission to take all the necessary action to eliminate the threat of lead in children's toys, and I continue to push for Congressional hearings on the regulations governing the safety of children's products. Congress must examine the frequency and effectiveness of children's product recalls and review the actions taken by the Consumer Product Safety Commission to protect children from harmful products.

Along with countless families in Illinois and across our nation, we greatly appreciate the latest report from Kids-in-Danger, *Playing With Poison: Lead Poisoning Hazards of Children's Product Recalls 1990-2004*, and continue to support the organization's efforts and goals of ensuring that children are safe, secure and protected. Together, we will accomplish the mission and make that goal a reality.

Executive Summary

Lead paint still coats everything from snaps on an infant's romper to Radio Flyer wagons. Elemental lead has been found in crayons, sidewalk chalk, and vending machine jewelry at levels 550 times what is considered toxic in paint. Lead is used again and again in products for its most vulnerable victims, counteracting the idea that no child's developmental potential should be jeopardized for playing with a toy.

Lead has been identified as a hazardous substance for over 100 years. It is especially hazardous to children ages six and younger, causing neurological damage, attention disorders, and numerous other adverse health effects. Regardless of the known hazards *and* the 1978 ban of lead paint, over 156 million units of children's products have been recalled due to the presence of lead since 1990.

Other findings include:

- Forty-nine children's products were recalled because of the presence of lead since 1990. Twenty-nine products (59%) were recalled because of lead paint, and twenty products (41%) were recalled because of elemental lead.
- There were over 2 million children's product units recalled because of lead paint, including over 1 million paint brushes because the handles were covered with lead paint.
- There were over 153 million children's product units recalled for the presence of elemental lead. The largest of which was the recall of over 152 million pieces of vending machine jewelry. Some of the jewelry contained 30% lead, levels that are over 550 times that which is considered to be toxic in paint and soil.
- Of the 26 recalled products with known locations of manufacturing only one, the Little Tikes crib center, was manufactured in the United States. Over 50% were manufactured in China.

There were only three reported injuries from recalled products; however, several factors may account for this. Lead poisoning is almost impossible to detect unless it is so severe that physical symptoms occur early on. In addition, pediatricians often screen for lead based on predetermined "high-risk" factors that do not include the risks associated with children's products. Thus, children's products containing both elemental lead and lead paint may be a dangerous source of poisoning that has been overlooked.

Based on these findings Kids In Danger recommends the following:

- The government should set a maximum allowable level of lead for children's products. The current regulation banning *accessible* lead does not work. CPSC should also encourage manufacturers to consider other less toxic materials that won't cause retardation.
- The best way to keep poisonous children's products off the market is to require pre-market testing. Even though lead paint has been banned since 1978, *and* The Federal Hazardous Substance Act (FHSA) bans hazardous products, without mandatory safety testing products that contain lead continue to enter the market and make their way into children's hands.

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Introduction

Lead has been identified as a hazardous substance for over 100 years: its harmful effects include neurological damage, behavioral problems and attention disorders to name a few. It is especially detrimental to children ages six and younger. However, lead paint still coats toys intended for cognitive development; it has been identified in sidewalk chalk, shoes, and vending machine jewelry. It's an ingredient that has also been found in crayons, board game pieces, and in the paint that covers anything from snaps on an infant's romper to Radio Flyer wagons. Since 1990, over 156 million units of children's products have been recalled due to high levels of lead. Lead is used again and again in products made for its most vulnerable victims.

An estimated one out of every six children under the age of seven in the United States has lead poisoning,¹ attributed almost entirely to lead-based paint found in housing built before 1978, the year it was banned. However, the alarming number of children's products recalled due to the presence of lead may be a dangerous source of poisoning that has not yet been considered.

Methodology

All recall information for this report was obtained from CPSC press releases. Press releases are issued jointly by a product manufacturer and the CPSC. The press release outlines the incidents, failures, and injuries caused by the product prior to the date of recall. All numbers, facts, and figures were taken from these reports. Additionally, requests for more detailed information about specific products were filed under the Freedom of Information Act. Data collected from additional sources is cited in endnotes.

Definition of children's products

A children's product is defined as any product designed or intended for the care of or use by children. Products that pose a potential danger to children but are not intended for their use are not considered children's products (such as cigarette lighters with faulty childproof locks or window blinds recalled for excess lead). The product name, manufacturer, number of units recalled, hazard, and incidents of failure, injury, and death were recorded for children's products recalled for the presence of lead since 1990 (Appendix A).

Only children's products under the jurisdiction of CPSC were considered. This excludes carseats and booster seats that are regulated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and food and medicines that are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) was created in 1972 by Congress under the Consumer Product Safety Act and began operating in 1973. In the Consumer Product Safety Act, Congress directed the CPSC to protect the public "against unreasonable risks of injuries associated with consumer products."

The CPSC has jurisdiction over more than 15,000 kinds of consumer products, and is charged with protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, mechanical hazard, or can injure children. CPSC works with manufacturers and consumers to identify and recall dangerous products, but rarely reviews products for safety before they are marketed.

The Federal Hazardous Substance Act (FHSA) 15 U.S.C. 1261(f)(1)

The Federal Hazardous Substance Act (FHSA) gives CPSC the authority to ban hazardous substances that threaten the health and safety of the public including products that contain elemental lead and lead paint. It is under this act that household products that expose children to hazardous quantities of lead under reasonably foreseeable conditions of handling or use are defined as hazardous substances. A toy or other product intended for use by children which contains a hazardous amount of lead *accessible* to children and may cause substantial personal injury or illness through handling or use, including ingestion, is a banned hazardous substance.²

Pursuant to this act CPSC has also banned paint and other similar surface coatings manufactured after 1978 that contain more than .06% lead.

THE FACTS ABOUT LEAD POISONING³

What is the most common cause?

The most common cause of lead poisoning is from lead-based paint found in homes built prior to 1978 when it was banned from residential use. Both paint chips and dust from lead based paint can be ingested or inhaled by a child, which can lead to lead poisoning. Most often this happens when children put their hands or toys that have been contaminated with lead dust in their mouths. Paint dust is most often found around doors and windows because opening and closing them creates a fine, imperceptible dust.

What are the symptoms of lead poisoning?

For the most part, lead poisoning has no obvious signs or abnormal symptoms. This makes it increasingly difficult to diagnose lead poisoning. At high blood lead levels symptoms might include stomachaches, decreased appetite, fever, and sleeping problems or irritability. Because these symptoms are very similar to other childhood illnesses, lead poisoning is sometimes mistaken for a cold or the flu.

What are the health effects of lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning is particularly harmful to the developing nervous systems of children under six years old. It can lead to a number of serious health problems including learning disabilities, mental retardation, behavioral problems, attention disorders, lowered IQ, stunted growth, and hearing impairment. Some recent studies claim that childhood lead poisoning can contribute to problems later in life such as academic failure, juvenile delinquency and high blood pressure.

How can I tell if my child has lead poisoning?

The only way to diagnose lead poisoning is by a blood test. A doctor or nurse takes blood from a child's finger or arm and sends the blood sample to a laboratory. A level of 10 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL) or greater is considered the "level of concern" defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, although newer studies have found negative health effects at even lower blood lead levels.

Is there a cure for lead poisoning?

The main treatment for lead poisoning is to remove the source of exposure. Removing the source of lead from a person's environment causes blood-levels to decline. In some cases medications are also used to lower blood-lead levels. These medicines, called chelating agents, allow the body to excrete lead more quickly. However, the damage already caused by the lead poisoning is irreversible.

What can you do to protect your family?

- Test your child at 6 months old, and annually after that as recommended by a doctor or if you suspect that your child has been exposed to lead. Most children's blood lead levels increase between the ages of 1 and 3 years which is why it is important to test children early and often.
- Check for products that are recalled for lead. Visit www.cpsc.gov or call 1-800-638-2772.
- Keep children away from peeling paint. If your home was built before 1950, and you have peeling paint, call the Illinois Department of Public Health's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 800-545-2200.
- Use only cold water and allow it to run for several minutes in the morning before drinking, cooking, or mixing infant formula in case lead pipes or solder are present in your plumbing system.
- Wash children's hands before they eat, after they play outside, and before they go to sleep.
- Regularly wet clean floors, windowsills, and other surfaces, as well as wipe soil off shoes before entering the house.
- Serve meals that are high in iron and calcium to help prevent lead from being absorbed into your children's bodies.

RECALLED CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN LEAD PAINT

Over 2 million children's products recalled because of lead paint

Of the 49 children's products recalled since 1990, 59% were recalled because of the presence of lead paint. Lead paint has been banned in the United States since 1978, and additionally is banned in the use of consumer products under the FHSA. However, lead paint is still present in children's products manufactured and sold as recently as this year. In fact, there were 2,540,291 units recalled due to the presence of lead in the paint.

Although lead paint has been banned since 1978, 29 different children's products were recalled due to the presence of lead-based paint since 1990. These recalls resulted in over 2 million recalled units.

Although all of these products pose a serious threat of poisoning to children, there were several products that appeared extremely dangerous. One example is the Kmart infant rompers recalled in 1996. First investigated because of reports of the paint chipping from the buttons, these rompers pose a serious risk of lead poisoning for several reasons. First, the paint easily came off the buttons located at the collar of the romper making it easy for an infant to ingest paint chips. Second, because of the negative neurological effects of lead, lead poisoning is most detrimental to younger children, such as those infants wearing this romper.

Table 1: Children's products recalled for lead paint hazards since 1990

Product	Manufacturer	Amount Recalled	Location of paint
Educational kits	Advantage Publishers Group	160,000	The paint on the toys.
Barney and Baby Bop bags, backpacks, and beach bags	Jaclym Inc	650,000	The paint on the zippers and the designs.
The Lamaze Flower Stroller Wrap and the Lamaze Soft Bead Buddies	Learning Curve Int' l., Inc.	3,800	On the metal wire of the toys.
17 models of pedal cars	Alpha International Inc (also know as Gearbox)	75,000	Paint coating on the cars
Dollhouse bathroom furniture	XL Machine Ltd.	10,000	Yellow paint on bathroom furniture
Magnet games	Safari Ltd.	21,000	Colorful paint on magnetic metal figures
Bobble head figurines	McDonalds and Bobble Dreams USA	100,000	Paint on the figurines
Infant girls garments	Wear Me Apparel Corp.	3,000	Paint on the "smiley face" zipper-pull on the jacket
Lily pad clacker instruments	Kindermusik International	430	Green paint on the clacker
Wooden bead necklaces and bracelets	Midwest Importers	26,000 necklaces 39,000 bracelets	The paint of the beads
Four different puzzles	U.S. Toy Company	10,000	The red paint on the puzzles
Paint brushes	M. Grumbacher	332,761	The paint on the brushes wooden handles
"Little Air Jordan" sneakers	NIKE	110,000	The red trim paint on these shoes contains high levels of lead.
Children' s Toy Brooms	EMSCO Inc	2,200	The paint on the handle of the broom.
Children' s Picnic Sets	Mervyn' s California	1,200	The paint on the bag that comes with the picnic sets.

Table 1: Children’s products recalled for lead paint hazards (continued)

Product	Manufacturer	Amount Recalled	Location of paint
Crib centers	Little Tikes	16,300	The paint on the candy cane roller
Paint kits	Polymeric	700,000	The paint on the wooden handles of the brushes sold with the kit
Paint brush set	Marx Brush manufacturing	6,000	Paint on the wooden handles of the brushes
Infant girls rompers	Kmart Corporation	23,000	Paint on the rompers’ buttons contains lead
Little wooden wagons	Radio Flyer	14,000	Lead in the red painted sides
Small plastic Halloween candy buckets	Direct Source International Inc.	11,700	Lead in the paint on the plastic bucket
Wooden beads on a cord, and spinning tops	Oriental Trading Company	44,400	Paint on the wooden toys
Infant boys rompers	Wear Me Apparel	30,000	Paint on the buttons
Children’ s umbrellas	Gymboree	7,200	Decorations on the umbrella contain lead paint
Miniature rocking chairs that were part of the Wee Patsy Travel Set	Effanbee Doll Company	2,500	The rocker is painted with lead paint
Spring/summer anoraks	Gap Kids	127,800	Paint on the zipper pull
Mulan backpacks and rolling luggage	Pyramid Accessories Inc.	3,700	Artwork on luggage contains lead paint.
Children’ s furniture	PJ Toys	8,300	Paint on the furniture contains lead
Animal Shape Wagons	Etna Products Co.	1,000	Paint on the animal shapes contains lead.

Toys intended for cognitive development recalled due to lead paint

Even toys that were intended to promote cognitive development contained lead paint. Learning Curve Int'l recalled two different activity toys that were painted with lead paint, The Lamaze Flower Stroller Wrap (green paint on the metal wire contained lead) and the Lamaze Soft Bead Buddies (blue paint on the metal wire contained lead.) The company states that the toys help encourage babies to discover their “inborn talents” and “celebrate developmental milestones.”⁴ However, the presence of lead paint covering the metal wires of the toys could easily negate the positive developmental benefits and instead cause, in addition to other things, learning disabilities and mental retardation.

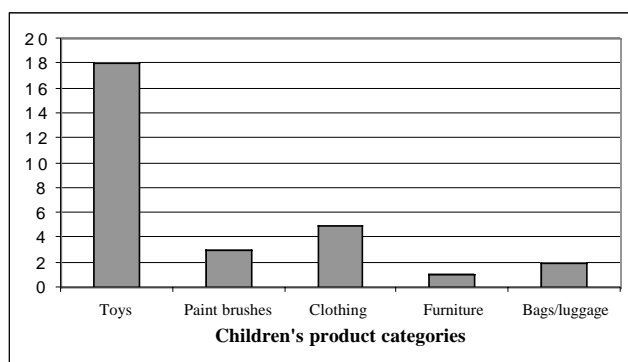
Even toys that were intended to promote cognitive development contained lead paint, easily negating any positive influences.

Learning Curve shipped over 3,000 Flower Stroller Wraps and Soft Bead Buddies to retailers worldwide, before finishing product tests. When the tests confirmed that both toys had paint that contained lead, the company reported the information to CPSC and initiated a recall.

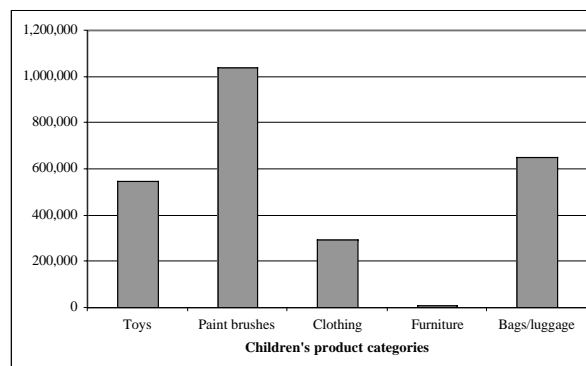
Types of children’s products recalled for lead paint

Children’s products recalled for lead paint fall into five broad categories: toys, clothing, bags/luggage, paint brushes, and furniture.

Although paint brushes make up only 10% of the children’s products recalled for lead paint, there were more than 1 million paint brushes recalled because their handles were covered with lead paint, a dangerous hazard to children who often chew on or mouth the brushes’ handles. Toys were most often recalled, making up 62% of the children’s products recalled for lead paint.



Graph 1: Number of children’s products recalled for lead paint hazards since 1990



Graph 2: Number of units of children’s products recalled for lead paint hazards since 1990

CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN ELEMENTAL LEAD

Children's products recalled for elemental lead hazards

There were 20 children's products recalled because they were made of lead, or contained high levels of elemental lead. Although the number of products recalled does not seem particularly alarming, the number of recalled units is. There were 153,507,777 units recalled because they contained lead, a majority of which were jewelry sold from vending machines.

Currently, there are no regulations banning the use of lead, even in children's products. Instead, the FHSA states toys and other products intended for use by children that contain a hazardous amount of *accessible* lead are banned hazardous products. Thus, a children's product can be made entirely of lead as long as it is covered with a protective coating that prevents the lead from becoming "accessible."

Currently, there are no regulations banning the use of elemental lead, even in children's products.

The CPSC considers eight major factors when deciding if a product is hazardous due to lead content. They consider each on a case-by-case basis. 1. the total amount of lead contained in a product, 2. the bio-availability of the lead, 3. the accessibility of the lead to children, 4. the age and foreseeable behavior of the children exposed to the product, 5. the foreseeable duration of the exposure, 6. the marketing of the product, 7. the patterns of use, and 8. the life cycle of the product. Based on the conclusions from these factors a product is determined to be hazardous or not.

Table 2: Children's products recalled for elemental lead hazards since 1990

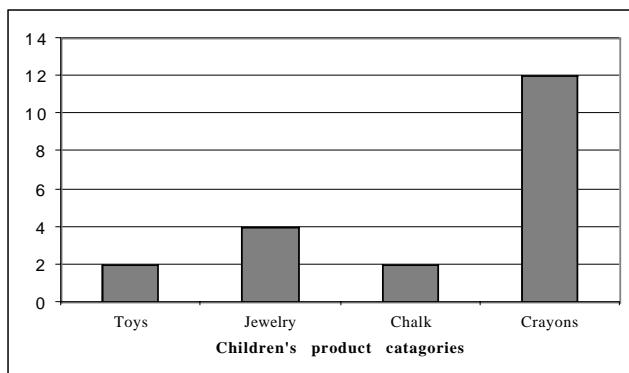
Product	Manufacturer	Amount Recalled	Lead Hazard
8 Crayons	Dynamic Division of Agora International	100,000	Contain high level of lead
12 Super Jumbo Crayons	Dynamic Division of Agora International	36,000	Contain high level of lead
64 Crayons	Baum Imports	80,400	Contain high levels of lead
64 Crayons	A.J. Cohen Distributors	226,008	Contain high levels of lead
Crayons	Glory Stationery Manufacturing Co	No crayons were sold at the retail level.	Contain high levels of lead
Jumbo Crayons	Concord Enterprises	430 cases	The yellow and orange crayons have high levels of lead
"I'm a Toys 'R' Us Kid! Crayons"	Toys "R" Us	102,000	Contain high levels of lead
Feido 12 Crayons	Kipp Brothers Inc	19,006	Contain high level of lead

Table 2: Children's products recalled for elemental lead hazards (continued)

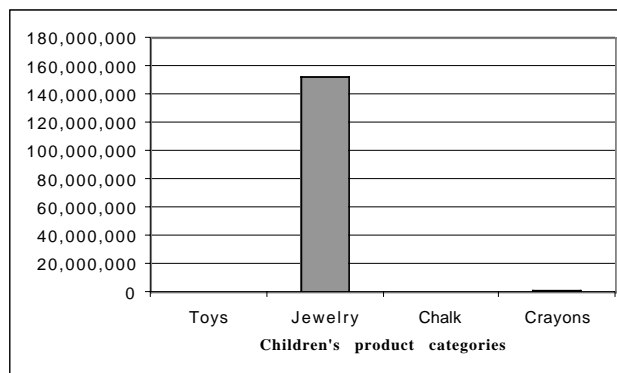
Product	Manufacturer	Amount Recalled	Lead Hazard
"Old Century Dread Pirate" coffee Table Games	Front Porch Classics	2,000	The metal in the ship game pieces contains lead
Metal toy jewelry sold in vending machines	A&A Global Industries, brand Imports, Cardinal Distributing Co, L.M. Becker & Co	150 million	The jewelry contains dangerous level of lead
Multi-colored and solid-colored sidewalk chalk	Manufactured by Agglo Corporation and imported by Toys "R" us	50,000	The chalk contains high levels of lead
Multi-colored sidewalk chalk	Manufactured by Agglo Corporation and imported by Target	26,000	The chalk contains high levels of lead
Crayons in Kaleidoscope Art sets	Shure Products Inc. and sold by Toys "R" Us	14,000	The crayons contain high levels of lead
Metallic heart-shaped medallion necklaces	Charming Shoppes Inc.	4,800	The metal necklace contains high levels of lead
Decals on Oscar Mayer Wienermobile pedal cars	Oscar Mayer	16,000	The decals on the cars contain high levels of lead
Toy necklaces	L.M. Becker & Co.	1.4 million	The necklace' s pedant contains high levels of lead
Children' s rings	Brand Imports	1 million	The rings contain high levels of lead
64 Crayons	Universal International	295,000	Contain high level of lead
64 Crayons, Kidz Biz	Bargin Wholesale	101,184	Contain high level of lead
Fun Time 72 Crayons	Overseas United	16,949	Contain high level of lead

Types of children's products recalled for elemental lead

The 20 children's products recalled for the presence of elemental lead fall into four categories: toys, jewelry, chalk, and crayons. Although there were twice as many crayon recalls than any other product, jewelry constituted the largest number of units recalled. There were 152,404,800 units of jewelry recalled.



Graph 3: Number of children's products recalled for elemental lead hazards since 1990



Graph 4: Number of units of children's products recalled for lead paint hazards since 1990

Table 3: Recalled vending machine jewelry

Product	Manufacturer(s)	Number of units	Location of production	Date of recall
Toy necklaces	L.M. Becker & Co.	1.4 million	India	September 10, 2003
Children's rings	Brand Imports	1 million	India	March 2, 2004
Metal toy jewelry sold in vending machines	A&A Global Industries, brand Imports, Cardinal Distributing Co, L.M. Becker & Co	150 million	unknown	July 8, 2004

Cheap lead-filled trinkets

A total of 152,400,000 pieces of jewelry sold in vending machines were recalled since 2003. The jewelry, rings, bracelets, pedants, and necklaces, all contained high levels of lead. Manufacturers state that the jewelry is coated to prevent the lead from leaching out, so although the jewelry may contain lead it is not *accessible* and therefore not a hazardous product under FHSA. Ken Giles spokesman for CPSC stated that the plating should be so effective that there is virtually no leaching.⁵ However, the recall of over 150 million pieces of jewelry shows that this is not the case.

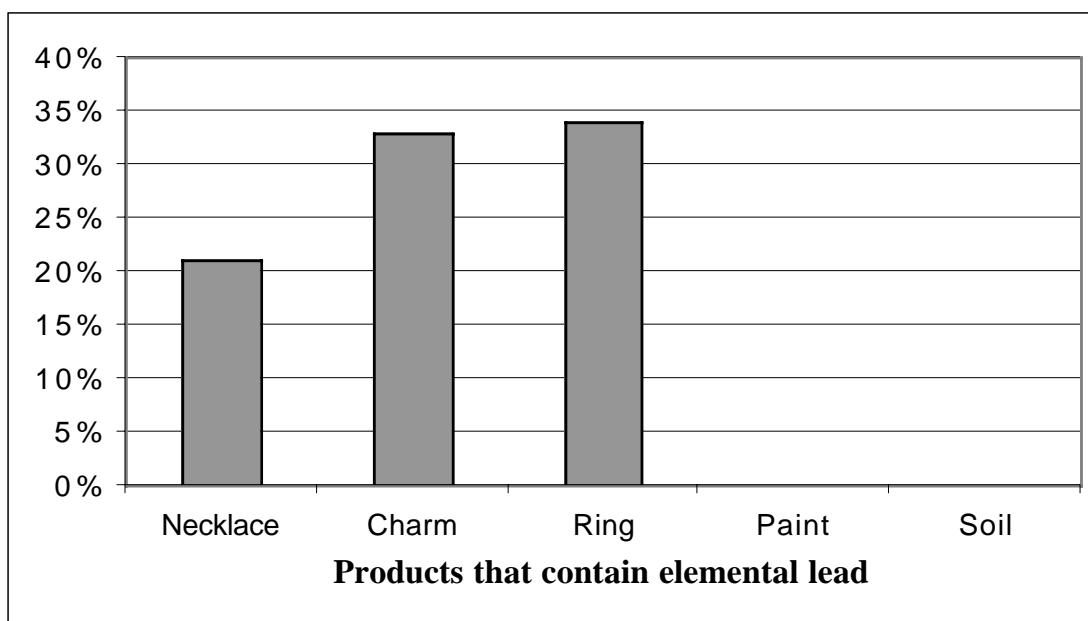
The jewelry can easily poison children if they suck on or swallow it, or even if they handle it and then put their hands in their mouths. CPSC and L.M. Becker & Co. began to recall the toxic jewelry in September 2003 when the report of a young child who swallowed the necklace's pendant was hospitalized for severe lead poisoning, costing \$40,000 in medical bills for a 25-cent trinket.⁶ His injury spurred the recall of 1.4 million necklaces, highlighting the possible dangers of vending machine jewelry.

However, six months later another million pieces of vending machine jewelry were recalled. This time Brand Imports recalled one million children's rings because they contained high levels of lead. Although both recalls involved 2.4 million pieces of jewelry, this was just the beginning.

On July 8, 2004 both L.M. Becker & Co, Brand Imports, as well as A & A global Industries and Cardinal Distributing Co recalled an additional 150 million pieces of pieces of jewelry again because of high levels of lead. The jewelry poses a great risk because children often put it in their mouths.

**The lead content of some vending machine jewelry
is over 550 times that which is considered to be
toxic in paint and soil**

In June 2004 *The Chicago Sun Times* performed an independent investigation of vending machine jewelry in Chicago, and found that 75% of the randomly purchased items contained toxic levels of lead. In fact eight of the items contained 18% lead or higher. For comparison paint containing .06% lead and soil with .04% lead are considered toxic. And although the lead content in paint is closely monitored, the government doesn't set maximum allowable levels of lead for children's rings, bracelets, charms and necklaces.



Graph 5: Comparison of levels of elemental lead found in products

The lead content of some vending machine jewelry is over 550 times that which is considered to be toxic levels in paint and soil.

Chalk that contains lead

The first warnings of sidewalk chalk that contained lead was when a 13-month-old child in Wisconsin was found to have elevated blood lead levels during a routine exam. The cause of the poisoning was found to be sidewalk chalk that contained high levels of lead. The chalk was later identified as "Double Dipp'n Fun" chalk manufactured by Agglo Corporation and sold by Target Corporation. Target recalled 26,000 packages of the chalk on November 13, 2003, just 11 days later Toys "R" Us recalled 50,000 packages of chalk manufactured by the same corporation.

The chalk is extremely hazardous to children's health because of the way that lead enters the body. One of the easiest ways to get lead poisoning is through dust that contains lead. Sidewalk chalk produces a lot of dust that can easily be ingested through hand to mouth contact or inhalation.

Explanation of lack of injuries

Although there are only several reported injuries from products recalled due to the presence of lead, it is almost impossible to tell if a child has lead poisoning unless it is so severe that physical symptoms occur early on. Thus the problem with lead poisoning is that parents often don't know about it until it becomes clear later that a child is having lead-related problems. Dr. Icy Cade-Bell, a pediatrician at the University of Chicago Hospitals, stated that: "You can't tell by looking at them. You might not have any symptoms."⁷ For example a child poisoned by chalk containing lead when he was three, may not show any symptoms until he is experiencing problems such as learning disabilities, behavioral problems, or attention disorders.

Children's products that contain lead may be a dangerous source of poisoning that has been overlooked.

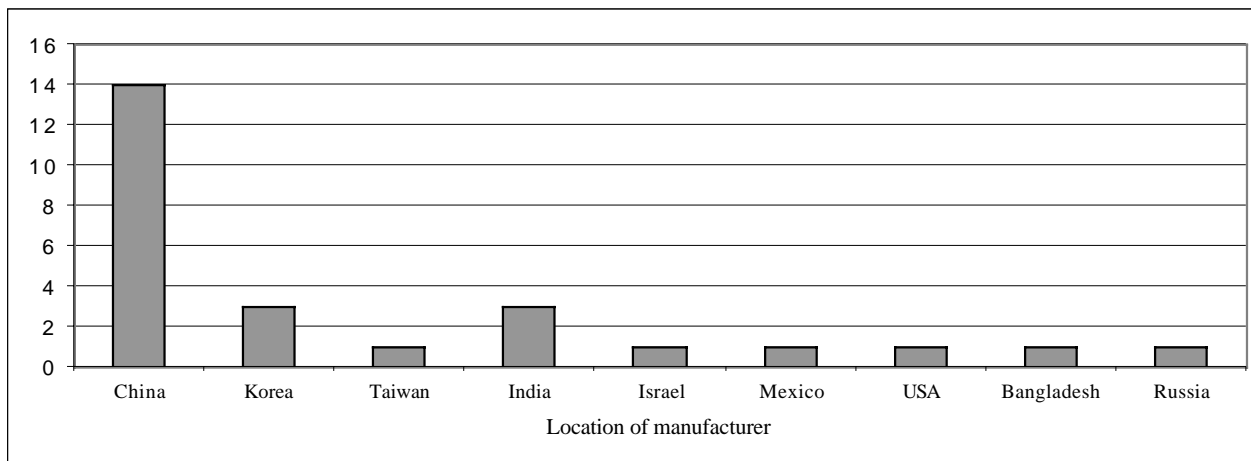
Another problem with identifying lead poisoning from children's products is that even when it is caught, pediatricians are unlikely to attribute it to children's products. A survey of pediatricians conducted in 1995 by Dr. James Campbell highlights pediatricians' views on the sources and screenings for lead poisoning.⁸ Only 53% of pediatricians attempt to test ALL their patients under 36 months of age. The pediatricians who selectively test their patients use factors such as living in an older home or near an industry that releases lead, Medicaid enrollment, and siblings with an elevated lead level. Although these screening practices may help to determine certain high-risk populations, they would not help to catch children who were poisoned by children's products.

Thus, although there are few reported incidents it is possible that many children have been exposed to lead by children's products. These estimated rates are high because these products are made for children, and thus cause a constant exposure. Children also have a tendency to put things in their mouths. This developmental response not only increases exposure when a crayon or piece of jewelry is mouthed, but when for instance chalk dust is on a child's hands and they place their hands in their mouth.

From the data available it seems impossible that 156,048,068 recalled units containing lead have only caused 3 related injuries. It is estimated that somewhere between 434,000 and more than 3 million children 6 years of age and younger have lead poisoning. The high end of this estimate represents almost one out of every six children under the age of 7.⁹ Lead paint from houses built before 1978 and high lead soil levels are cited as the largest causes of lead poisoning. Children's products containing lead are usually not considered a cause although they may be a dangerous source of poisoning that has been overlooked.

Most lead children's products manufactured overseas

Most children's products containing lead were manufactured internationally. Although lead paint has been banned in the United States for over 25 years, the ban on the use of lead in paint is often not held to these standards in other countries. Of the 49 children's products recalled due to lead paint, 26 have known locations of manufacturing, and of these 26 only one, the Little Tikes crib center, was manufactured in the United States.



Graph 6: Location of production of recalled children's products containing lead

Conclusion

In 1998 CPSC released a statement saying that toy manufacturers agreed to rid products of lead. According to Toy Manufacturers of America (TMA, now called TIA, Toy Industry of America) President David Miller, "TMA members have always been vigilant in ensuring that children are not exposed to hazardous levels of lead from their products. We are now going beyond what the law requires, and eliminating lead from our products altogether."¹⁰

Despite their self-proclaimed "vigilance" lead is still found in children's products. TMA stated that "lead is not deliberately added to any toy product, most cases resulted because of suppliers not following the manufacturing specifications." However, just because there was no intention of using lead, that does not eliminate the dangers once it is present. Good intentions can still lead to poisoning. It seems that going "beyond what the law requires" should include regulating the suppliers.

TMA exemplifies the point that although the presence of lead in children's products is usually not intentional, without stricter regulation lead will continue to be present in children's products.

Lead paint, which has been banned for over 25 years, still continues to coat the surfaces of children's products. This proves that there is a need for mandatory testing, without which children's products will continue to be toxic. The numbers show that it is obviously not enough to ban lead paint, products must be tested before they are sold to ensure that manufacturers have complied with the law.

Elemental lead in children's products is a different concern. Although the government has set legal limits for lead in paint (.06%), lead in soil (.04%), and even recommended a legal limit for lead in window blinds (.02%) they have not set a legal limit or even a recommendation for lead in children's products. Without a legal limit, or even a recommendation, children's products like a vending machine ring can be made entirely of elemental lead, which combined with an ineffective coating is a dangerous poisoning hazard.

Recommendations

- The government should set a maximum allowable level of lead or at the very least a recommendation for children's products. The current regulation banning *accessible* lead does not work. Why not encourage manufacturers to consider other less toxic materials that won't cause retardation? No child's developmental potential should be jeopardized for playing with a toy.
- Manufacturers of children's products should be required to certify that each batch of paint they use is lead free *prior* to importing the product. This would help eliminate lead paint in children's products.
- Healthcare providers should consider children products as a possible source of lead poisoning, especially when other environmental factors have been ruled out. Additionally, pediatricians should consider the threat posed by children's products when selectively testing children based on predetermined factors. Although studies have shown that there are specific "high-risk" populations, lead poisoning from children's products affects children across socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, it is recommended that ALL children should be tested for lead poisoning.
- The best way to keep poisonous children's products off the market is to require pre-market testing. Even though lead paint has been banned since 1978, *and* The Federal Hazardous Substance Act (FHSA) bans hazardous products, without mandatory safety testing products that contain lead continue to enter the market and make their way into children's hands. Currently in the House Subcommittee on Commerce Trade and Consumer Protection Illinois Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky introduced HR 2911, the Infant and Toddler Durable Product Safety Act, which calls for pre-market safety testing of durable children's products. If passed into legislation this act would help to prevent unsafe products from entering the market.

About Kids In Danger



Danny Keysar was killed by the Playskool Travel Lite portable crib. His parents founded KID just weeks after he died.

Kids In Danger is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children's product safety. KID was founded in 1998 by the parents of sixteen-month-old Danny Keysar who died in his Chicago childcare home when a portable crib collapsed around his neck. Although the portable crib had been recalled five years earlier, word of its danger had not reached Danny's parents, caregiver, or a state inspector who visited the home just eight days before Danny's death. To date, 16 children have died in cribs of similar faulty design.

KID's mission is to **promote** the development of safer children's products, **advocate** for a legislative and regulatory strategy for children's product safety and **educate** the public, especially parents and caregivers, about dangerous children's products.

Endnotes

¹ Illinois Department of Health: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/public.hb/hblead.htm>

² The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: Letter to manufacturers, importers, distributors, and retailers of vending machine jewelry. July 1, 2004.

³ Information on the facts about lead poisoning is from:

The American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://www.healthychildcare.org/pdf/leadpoisoning.pdf>

The Illinois Department of Public Health: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/public.hb/hblead.htm>

The U.S. Environmental protection Agency: http://www.epa.gov/region02/faq/lead_p.htm

The Consumer Product Safety Commission: <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/426.html>

⁴ <http://www.learningcurve.com/ourProducts/lamaze.asp>

⁵ Zimmermann, Stephanie. "High levels of lead in children's trinkets." *The Chicago Sun-Times*. June 15, 2004.

⁶ Zimmermann, Stephanie. "High levels of lead in children's trinkets." *The Chicago Sun-Times*. June 15, 2004.

⁷ Zimmermann, Stephanie. "High levels of lead in children's trinkets." *The Chicago Sun-Times*. June 15, 2004.

⁸ American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://www.aap.org/research/periodicsurvey/ps28exs.htm>

⁹ Illinois Department of Health: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/public.hb/hblead.htm>

¹⁰ The Consumer Product Safety Commission: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml98/98154.html>

Appendix A: Children's products recalled due to lead hazards (1990 – 2004)

Date of recall	Product	Manufacturer	Amount Recalled	Where it was manufactured	Lead Hazard	Injuries
May 22, 1991	Paint kits	Polymeric	700,000	Unknown	The paint on the wooden paintbrush handles	None reported
August 13, 1991	Paintbrush set	Marx Brush manufacturing	6,000	Korea	The paint on the wooden paintbrush handles	None reported
March 5, 1992	Paintbrushes	M. Grumbacher	332,761	Korea Sri Lanka	The paint on the wooden paintbrush handles	None reported
June 16, 1992	Crib centers	Little Tikes	16,300	USA	The paint on the candy cane roller	None reported
March 4, 1993	Four different puzzles	U.S. Toy Company	10,000	Israel	The red paint on the puzzles	None reported
April 2, 1993	Barney and Baby Bop bags, beach bags, and backpacks	Jaclyn Inc	650,000	Unknown	The paint on the zipper pull and bag's graphics	None reported
December 13, 1993	Wooden bead jewelry	Midwest Importers	26,000 necklaces 39,000 bracelets	China	The paint on the beads	None reported
March 22, 1994	12 Jumbo Crayons	Concord Enterprises	430 cases	China	The yellow and Orange crayons contain lead.	None reported
April 5, 1994	Safe 48 Non-Toxic I'm a Toys "r" Us Kid! Crayons	Toys "R" Us	100,000	China	The crayons contain high levels of lead.	None reported
April 5, 1994	Crayons	Glory Stationery Manufacturing Company	None of the crayons were sold at the retail level	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	64 Crayons	A.J. Cohen Distributors	226,008	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	64 Crayons	Baum Imports	80,400	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	12 Crayons	Kipp Brothers	19,006	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	8 Crayons	Dynamic Division of Agora International	120,000	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	Fun Times 72 Crayons	Overseas United	16,949	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	64 Crayons	Universal International	295,000	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	64 Crayons, Kidz Biz	Bargain Wholesale	101,184	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
April 5, 1994	12 Super Jumbo Crayons	Dynamic Division of Agora International	36,000	Unknown	The crayons contain high levels of lead	None reported
May 6, 1994	Animal Shape Wagons	Etna Products Co.	1,000	China	Paint on the animal shaped wagons	None reported

September 7, 1994	Kaleidoscope Art sets	Shure Products	14,000	China	The crayons contain high levels of lead.	None reported
May 22, 1996	Infant girls rompers	Kmart Corporation	23,000	Bangladesh	Paint on the rompers' buttons	None reported
October 21, 1996	Little wooden wagons	Radio Flyer	14,000	Unknown	Red paint on the wagons' sides	None reported
October 24, 1996	Small plastic Halloween candy buckets	Direct Source International Inc.	11,700	China	Painted designs on the plastic bucket	1
December 17, 1996	Wooden beads on a cord, and spinning tops	Oriental Trading Company	44,400	China	Paint on the wooden toys	None reported
March 11, 1997	Infant boys rompers	Wear Me Apparel	30,000	Unknown	Paint on the rompers' cap snaps	None reported
May 12, 1997	Children's necklaces	Charming Shoppes Inc.	4,800	Unknown	The metallic heart-shaped medallion contains lead	None reported
August 5, 1997	Children's umbrellas	Gymboree	7,200	Unknown	Painted decorations on the umbrella	None reported
January 29, 1998	Miniature rocking chairs, part of the Wee Patsy Travel Set	Effanbee Doll Company	2,500	Unknown	The paint on the rocker	None reported
June 2, 1998	Oscar Mayer Wienermobile pedal cars	Oscar Mayer Foods Corp.	16,000	Unknown	The decals on the cars contain high levels of lead.	None reported
August 18, 1998	Mulan backpacks and rolling luggage	Pyramid Accessories Inc.	3,700	Unknown	Artwork on luggage contains lead paint.	None reported
June 3, 1998	Spring/summer anoraks	Gap Kids	127,800	Russia	Paint on the zipper pull	None reported
September 3, 1998	Children's Furniture	PJ Toys	8,300	Unknown	Paint on the furniture	None reported
March 5, 1999	"Little Air Jordan" sneakers	NIKE	110,000	Unknown	The red trim paint on the shoes	1
December 21, 1999	Magnet games	Safari Ltd.	21,000	Taiwan	Colorful paint on magnetic metal figures	None reported
June 1, 2000	Children's Picnic Sets	Mervyn's California	1,200	Unknown	The paint on the bag that comes with the picnic sets	None reported
March 1, 2001	Children's Toy Brooms	EMSCO Inc	2,200	Mexico	The paint on the handle of the broom	None reported
July 10, 2001	"Let's Start Number" and "Optical Illusions Lab" educational kits	Advantage Publishers	160,000	Unknown	The paint on the toys	None reported
August 20, 2001	Dollhouse bathroom furniture	XL Machine Ltd.	10,000	China	Yellow paint on bathroom furniture	None reported
February 20, 2002	17 models of pedal cars	Alpha International Inc (also know as Gearbox)	75,000	Korea	Paint coating on the cars	None reported
September 17, 2002	Bobble head figurines	McDonalds and Bobble Dreams USA	100,000	China	Paint on the figurines	None reported
December 20, 2002	Infant girls garments	Wear Me Apparel Corp.	3,000	China	Paint on the "smiley face" jacket zipper-pull	None reported
April 4, 2003	Two different activity toys	Learning Curve Int'l	3,800	China	Paint on the metal wire on the toys	None reported

September 10, 2003	Toy necklaces	L.M. Becker & Co.	1.4 million	India	The necklace's pendant contains high levels of lead.	1
November 13, 2003	Multicolored sidewalk chalk	Target (manufactured by Agglo Corp)	26,000	China	The chalk contains high levels of lead	None reported
November 24, 2003	Solid colored and multicolored sidewalk chalk	Toys "R" Us (manufactured by Agglo Corp)	50,000	China	The chalk contains high levels of lead	None reported
January 14, 2004	Lily pad clacker instruments	Kindermusik International	430	India	Green paint on the clacker	None reported
March 2, 2004	Children's rings	Brand Imports	1 million	India	The rings contain high levels of lead	None reported
May 27, 2004	Old Century Dread Pirate game	Front Porch Classics	2,000	China	The metal ship playing pieces contain lead	None reported
July 8, 2004	Metal toy jewelry sold in vending machines	A & A Global, Brand Imports, Cardinal Distributing Co, and L.M. Becker & Co	150 million	Unknown	The toy jewelry contains high levels of lead.	None reported