

Illinois Group Warns Parents of Potentially

Dangerous Toys

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BY SHAMUS TOOMEY - Chicago Sun Times

As the holiday season gears up, consumer advocates are again warning parents to do their homework and be vigilant about keeping dangerous toys out of the hands -- and mouths -- of kids.

The Illinois Public Interest Research Group's Education Fund released its 19th annual "Trouble in Toyland" report Tuesday, highlighting toys it says are slipping through the cracks of the toy industry's safety standards.

This year's list includes toy tanks the groups says are too loud, children's nail polish with toxic chemicals and toys with parts that can easily break off and be swallowed. The full report can be found at www.toysafety.net.

TOYS THAT CAN POTENTIALLY CAUSE CHOKING, STRANGULATION

The Illinois Public Interest Research Group's Education Fund released its list of potentially dangerous toys to

Potential choking hazard:

*Geoffrey Inc.; "Fun Years Music" drum set. Small parts can fit into choke tube, meaning too small for yo

*Battat; "Pal on the Go!" pull toy. Pull cord separates, leaving a small part attached to string.

- *Dollar Tree Dist.; Toy Tunes Light & Sound Musical Toy. Bead at end of drumstick pops off.
- *Clever Factory; Buzz Buzz Butterfly, Zoom Zoom Race Car, Click Clack Train, Itsy Bitsy Spider cardboard.
- *Dalmatian Press; Two by Two Coloring Book with 12 animal-shaped crayons fit in choke tube.
- *Marvel/Toy Biz Worldwide; Spider-Man Web Attack with Web Missile Launcher. Missile tips fit in choke tube.
- *Cititoy Inc.; Triplets. Pacifiers fit in choke tube.
- *Small World Toys; All About Baby Hairstyle Central. Doll's hair accessories fit in choke tube.
- *Gotz; Kinderland Kimy Bathtime. Tip of closet rod pops off easily.
- *Corolle; Les Cheries Camille Valise Doll. Hair clips fit in choke tube.
- *Kid Connection; Soundable Hand Puppet. Eyeballs break apart.
- *Fun Express; Flashing Star Wand. Small parts

Potential strangulation hazard:

- *Water Yo-Yo Ball/Yo-Yo Meteoric Ball
- *Ganz; Bungee-Roos (assorted animals)

Loud toys:

- *Fisher-Price; Learn Through Music.
- *Geoffrey Inc.; Elite Operations M-1 Tank

Potentially toxic toys:

- *Townley Cosmetics; Hilary Duff Twinkle Toes Pedicure Set

"The information in this report will save lives," said U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), the ranking Democrat on a House consumer protection subcommittee.

Industry defends safety

PIRG's past reports have led to 120 product recalls, including 17 last year. Still, 11 children under age 15 died from toy-related injuries nationwide last year, and tens of thousands were hospitalized, said John Gaudette, IPIRG's legislative advocate.

A chief concern is choking. Advocates warned parents to beware of popped balloons, small balls and toy pieces that break or fall off. A guideline to follow, the group said, is if a toy part can fit into a toilet paper roll, it's too small for kids under 3.

The group recommended parents carefully read labels if buying children's cosmetic sets. It found several toys with nail polish that included xylene and dibutyl phthalate, potentially toxic chemicals if swallowed.

The group also warned against the yo-yo water ball, a toy that can wrap around a child's neck and cause strangulation.

In a statement, the Toy Industry Association said U.S. toys are the most highly regulated in the world, and its members work to ensure toy safety year-round.

"In the past, the U.S. government has reviewed toys on these consumer groups' lists -- only to discover that nearly all meet the strict U.S. product safety standards," the association said.