

Skokie Woman Gets eBay to Ban yo-yo Balls

BY AMY RAINEY - Skokie Review

(July 15, 2004) Lisa Lipin's yearlong effort to ban the Yo-Yo Waterball has now resulted in eBay prohibiting the sale of the toy on its Web site.

"They took really quick action," said Lipin, whose then 5-year-old son choked when the stretchy cord of the toy wrapped around his neck in July of last year. "They believe in public safety. They took the initiative to get this product off the market."

After Lipin first made contact on June 25, eBay said it was not going to change its policy, she said. After that, Lipin sent more information to the company. Lipin also has the support of U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-9th, of Evanston, who sent a letter to eBay urging they ban the yo-yo ball.

"Congresswoman Schakowsky is examining all avenues - legislative, regulatory and otherwise - to get this toy off the market and away from children," said Nadeam Elshami, a spokesman for Schakowsky.

On July 6, eBay contacted Lipin to say they would prohibit the sale of the toy on their online auction site. Other retailers, such as Toys R Us, Wal-Mart, Walgreens, and most recently 7-Eleven, have banned the sale of the toy as well. In June, 7-Eleven announced it would not sell the toy after Lipin contacted the company.

eBay is in the process of taking the yo-yo balls off the site, eBay spokesman Hani Durzy said. Part of eBay's decision was that the toy is illegal in some countries where eBay does business, he said. Durzy said eBay also looked into the other retailers who had banned the Yo-Yo

Waterball because of the potential hazard.

"In looking at all of this we felt it was in the best interest of the overall community to not allow the sale of these items through the eBay marketplace," Durzy said.

The Yo-Yo Waterball, a squishy, liquid-filled ball on a stretchy rubber cord, is a generic toy made by several manufacturers.

Lipin, who said she feels the Consumer Product Safety Commission is not doing enough, is now focusing her efforts to ban the toy on corporate social responsibility.

"The toy companies, the corporations have a responsibility to protect the consumer," she said. "We as consumers assume a product put on the store shelf is safe."

The CPSC is still collecting data on the yo-yo balls. The CPSC said it cannot make the legal case to ban the sale of the Yo-Yo Waterballs because there are several factors they have to examine other than the number of incidents.