

Local Resident Not Satisfied With Yo-Yo Ball Ruling

Skokie Review

October, 2 2003

The Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a parental advisory last week on the strangulation risks to young children of the yo-yo water ball toy.

But a Skokie woman who raised the issue last month after her son was injured with one of the toys says that is not good enough.

Lisa Lipin, whose 5-year-old son Andrew was nearly strangled when the cord of a yo-yo ball wrapped around his throat, said she still wants the agency to recall the toys.

"It's not a recall," Lipin said Tuesday. "I'm not happy with this. It's not good enough for me. I want a recall."

The yo-yo ball consists of a water filled rubber ball attached to an elastic cord.

The CPSC, which had been investigating the toys after receiving 186 reports of incidents in which the cord wrapped around a child's neck, issued a warning Sept. 24.

The commission said that parents who are concerned about a risk to their children could, in addition to supervising the use of the toy, cut off the cord or throw the toy away.

The report cited seven cases where children had broken blood vessels affecting the eyes, eyelids, cheeks, neck, scalp or area behind the ears. At the same time, though, the commission said that the toy poses a low risk of strangulation.

Based on what the commission called the "low risk of injury presented by the product" it said the yo-yo water ball does not meet congressionally mandated standards for a recall.

Lipin, who lives in Skokie, credits U.S. **Rep. Jan Schakowsky**, D-9th, for the CPSC's action. Schakowsky is ranking Democrat on the House Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection subcommittee, which directly oversees the CPSC.

A spokesman for Schakowsky said Schakowsky contacted the agency about the yo-yo balls seeking immediate action - last week's warning - and an eventual recall of the toys. Schakowsky, he said, considers the toys dangerous enough to warrant the recall and plans to pursue the issue.

So does Lipin, who cites a recall of the toys in Canada issued by that country's Consumer Product Safety agency. They also have been banned in the United Kingdom and France.

With that ammunition, as well as reports from around the country about the safety hazards of the toy, Lipin said she plans to keep up her fight.

She has been contacting local retailers, who she said are reluctant to pull the toy off the shelves. Some large chains such as have stopped selling them, but Lipin said smaller retailers are more reluctant to do anything.

In part, she said, the warning rather than a recall may be to blame.

"I think that gives retailers a false sense of security," Lipin said. "It is dangerous. Look at the other countries."

Also, she said, while the CPSC may cite 186 complaints, there likely are many more incidents that went unreported.

Lipin said she recently was at a Skokie School District 68 Fall Fest "and a lot of parents came up to me and said the same thing had happened." Thanks to Lipin's efforts the district has banned the toys.

Now, Lipin said, she plans to pursue an appeal to the CPSC. The three-step process involves gathering enough information to convince the agency to issue a recall, she said.

"I'm going to give it my best shot," Lipin said. "I still believe the decision not to recall it was poor judgment."

When I see somebody playing with it, I go tell them what happened to my kid."