

YO-YO BALL TOY BANNED IN TWO COUNTRIES

GOOD MORNING AMERICA

Charles Gibson - ABC News

September 24, 2003 Wednesday

So, we'll be getting to all that and we will get back with Mrs. Bush in a just a moment, but we want to start this half-hour with what is -an important consumer report this morning about a toy which is called Yo-Yo Ball, and it's mesmerized children across the country. It is extraordinarily popular and millions of kids are playing with this squishy, stretchy ball, but it was recently banned in Australia and Britain, these are the balls that are involved, it was banned in those two countries for safety reasons. And as ABC's Consumer Affairs Correspondent Greg Hunter tells us, pressure is now building in this country to do the same.

JUSTICE GILKES, NEARLY STRANGLER BY TOY

All of a sudden, it just came down and wrapped around my neck.

JULIANA SHIRLEY, NEARLY STRANGLER BY TOY

I was trying to go like that, but it -mistake and went around my neck.

GREG HUNTER, ABC NEWS

(Voice Over) Problems with one of the most popular toys of the summer. It's like a yo-yo on a bungee cord. Made and imported by 20 or more companies. As many as 15 million have been sold.

GREG HUNTER

(Off Camera) This is one of the toys. Kids play with it simply by swinging it around like this. Now, imagine my arm as a child's neck and you can see why consumer safety advocates say this is a strangulation hazard. And in the last six months, the government's received 186 complaints of problems with this toy.

GREG HUNTER

(Voice Over) But the Consumer Product Safety Commission says there have been no deaths or even serious injuries, apparently unaware of this six year-old in Massachusetts who spent the night in the hospital, treated for near-strangulation.

LYNN MORAN, JUSTICE'S MOTHER

They said in the hospital he had one more minute with that thing wrapped around his neck. They kept telling him what a very lucky boy he was.

GREG HUNTER

(Voice Over) The government also says the toys do not violate flammability standards.

TOY TESTER, MALE

Wow, that's going pretty good.

GREG HUNTER

(Voice Over) What many American parents may not know is this hot toy has been in hot water in other parts of the world. It's many taken off the market in Canada, Britain, France, and elsewhere. This spring, alarmed consumer officials in New York and Massachusetts urged Washington regulators to act.

BETH LINDSTROM,

MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE CONSUMER AFFAIRS

It's a dangerous toy. It -it just should be taken out of the toy box.

GREG HUNTER

(Voice Over) Some major retailers have stopped selling them. But in an exclusive interview with "Good Morning America," US Consumer Products Safety Commissioner Hal Stratton says there will be no recall.

HAL STRATTON, CHAIRMAN, CPSC

We cannot make the showing that Congress requires of us in our statute to issue a complete recall of this particular product.

REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY,

DEMOCRAT, ILLINOIS

Well, I think that the product should be recalled. They say that there is a potential risk of strangulation. That's good enough for me.

JULIANA SHIRLEY

The Consumer Product Safety Commission says while it is not ordering a recall, it is warning parents of what it says is a low, but potential risk from these toys. And it says if parents are worried about them, they can cut this cord off, eliminating any strangulation hazard. Meanwhile, Hal Stratton, who you saw, the chairman of the CPSC, tells us that he has taken these toys away from his own young children. Time now for the weather. We're gonna go to Rebecca Kolls who is filling in for Tony Perkins, and she is in Miami this morning. Rebecca, good morning.