

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
Subcommittees:
Ranking Member, Commerce,
Manufacturing, and Trade
Health
Oversight and Investigation
CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1309

5533 N. BROADWAY, SUITE 2
CHICAGO, IL 60640
Telephone: 773-506-7100
Fax: 773-506-9202
1852 JOHNS DRIVE
GLENVIEW, IL 60025
Telephone: 847-328-3409
Fax: 847-328-3425

December 14, 2016

Lars Petersson
President
IKEA North America Services, LLC
420 Alan Wood Road
Conshohocken, PA 19428

Dear Mr. Petersson:

I write with concerns about the effectiveness of IKEA's recall of 29 million unstable dressers. The IKEA dresser recall is one of the largest consumer product safety recalls in history. However, the monthly recall reports that I have reviewed thus far indicate that only a tiny fraction of IKEA customers have received refunds or repair kits. Given the risk that tip-over accidents pose to households – particularly households with children – I request further information on the efforts IKEA is making to inform consumers about the recall and provide remedies in a timely manner.

Up to this point, the IKEA dresser recall has been marked by delay and insufficient action. After two deaths from Malm dresser tip-overs, IKEA and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced a "repair program" – not a recall – to distribute free wall anchoring kits.¹ Despite the millions of dressers sold, IKEA only distributed a few hundred thousand kits. Clearly, the efforts were inadequate. In February, a third toddler died in a tip-over accident involving IKEA's Malm dresser. The toddler's parents were not aware of the repair program or the danger the dresser posed.² A total of seven deaths have now been linked to IKEA dressers.³

I, along with Senator Klobuchar, wrote to you in May urging a full recall of Malm dressers, suspension of sales, and remedies for consumers including a full refund. On June 28, 2016, IKEA and the CPSC announced such a recall of Malm and other unstable IKEA dressers.⁴ While this was a positive step, I have been underwhelmed by IKEA's subsequent actions.

¹ U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (2016, July). *IKEA Offers Free Wall Anchoring Repair Kit for Chests and Dressers Due to Tip-over Hazard After Two Children Died*. Retrieved from <https://www.cpsc.gov/newsroom/news-releases/2015/ikea-offers-free-wall-anchoring-repair-kit-for-chests-and-dressers/>

² ABC Eyewitness News (2016, July). *Local Family's Tragic Story Forces IKEA recall, Inspires Legislation*. Retrieved from <http://kstp.com/news/ikea-recall-legislation-sturdy-ted-mcgee-malm-dresser-death/4205329/>

³ Good Housekeeping (2016, November). *UPDATE: Seventh Child's Death Linked to Recalled IKEA Dressers*. Retrieved from <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home-products/news/a33538/ikea-chests-dressers-recall/>

⁴ U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (2016, June). *Following an Additional Child Fatality, IKEA Recalls 29 Million MALM and Other Models of Chests and Dressers Due to Serious Tip-Over Hazard; Consumers Urged to Anchor Chests and Dressers or Return for Refund*. Retrieved from <https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/2016/following-an-additional-child-fatality-ikea-recalls-29-million-malm-and-other-models-of>

According to your staff, IKEA did not directly notify consumers of the recall beyond the first month following the announcement of the recall. At that point, it shifted consumer communication to its “Secure it!” campaign. However, the “Secure it!” campaign appears to fall outside the Corrective Action Plan for the dresser recall and includes no mention of the recall or the availability of refunds for unsafe products.

IKEA has made wall anchoring and shared responsibility a dominant theme of its messaging after the recall. “Secure it!” materials state, “By working together, we can help prevent these accidents and make the home a safer place. ... The best way to help prevent furniture tip over accidents is to secure furniture to the wall.”⁵ While wall anchoring provides additional stability and helps prevent accidents, wall anchoring is no substitute for safe design.

Despite the focus on wall anchoring, IKEA was slow to distribute wall anchoring kits to consumers upon request. Such delays are dangerous. In fact, I am aware of at least one tip-over accident that resulted in injury that occurred after the consumer requested a repair kit but before that kit arrived. IKEA’s inability to distribute such kits in a timely manner is surprising given that free wall anchoring kits had long been offered through the repair program before it expanded into a full recall. However, it appears that IKEA did not appropriately prepare for even the low response rate that the recall received.

The IKEA dressers recalled were inherently unsafe. They could not meet the voluntary industry standard for furniture stability (ASTM F2057-14). Wall anchoring is not enough to stop fatal accidents. Consumers may fail to anchor furniture for reasons ranging from lack of awareness to restrictions from the property owner. Inherent stability must be a primary goal for furniture manufacturers such as IKEA.

Given the low response rate to the recall and ongoing safety issues, I respectfully request your response to the following questions by January 13, 2017:

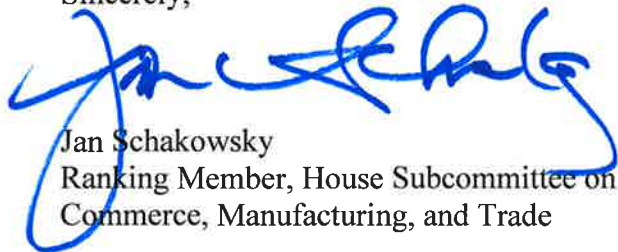
1. How many refunds has IKEA provided under the June 28 recall?
2. How many wall anchoring kits have been distributed since June 28?
3. What would you consider to be a good response rate (the share of affected consumers that receive a remedy – repair kit or refund) to the IKEA recall?
4. IKEA has said that it went to extra lengths to notify consumers about the recall.
 - a. What methods has your company used to notify customers of the June 28 recall and the remedy options available? Where does IKEA currently post notice of the recall and available remedies for consumers?
 - b. What effort did IKEA make to directly communicate with affected consumers? Does IKEA plan any direct communication in the future specifically mentioning the recall and the availability of refunds to consumers?

⁵ IKEA (2016). *Secure It! Creating Safer Homes Together*. Retrieved from http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_AU/customer_service/ikea_services/safer_homes.html

- c. How does the response rate for the dresser recall compare to previous IKEA recalls? Would you consider the response rate significantly higher than previous recalls?
5. Why did consumers experience a delay in receiving free wall anchoring kits after the June 28 recall? What steps has IKEA taken to address the delay and prevent similar issues in the future?
6. What, if any, clothing storage products, currently sold by IKEA fail to meet the voluntary industry standard for furniture stability (ASTM F2057-14) without the use of wall anchors? Has IKEA redesigned any products to meet the voluntary industry standard without the use of wall anchors?
7. Please provide a list of all furniture products sold by IKEA for which an anchoring system is required or suggested by IKEA. For each product listed, please identify and provide the text of the stability standard that the product is intended to meet. And for each of these products, please clarify whether IKEA is attempting to meet the stability standard without the use of an anchoring system.

I look forward to your response on what further actions IKEA will take to protect consumers from furniture tip-over accidents.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on
Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade