

WHY WE NEED THE CIVIL JUSTICE SYSTEM: TOYS

Choking Hazards

The choking hazards of small toy parts, small balls, and balloons have long been one of the leading causes of toy-related fatalities. At least 196 children died from choking on such items between 1990 and 2007, and choking hazards were the leading cause of CPSC toy recalls in 2009. Yet the millions of recalled toys may just be the tip of the iceberg. Many toys still on shelves barely meet the CPSC standard for small pieces. Of particular danger are objects that are narrow in shape, such as toy nails or darts, because they can more easily cause suffocation. In 2007, at least two boys died after asphyxiating on soft darts from Chinese-made toy guns. The toy's importer refused to recall the gun. At least one other child died under the same circumstances before a civil action by one of the families persuaded the retailer to pull it off shelves.



Children's Jewelry

Children's jewelry is more likely to contain lead or other toxic metals than many other toys. Even after 18 million pieces of children's jewelry were recalled between 2005 and 2007, CPSC tests still found that 20 percent of children's jewelry contained unsafe levels of lead. Even after manufacturers stopped using lead, the danger was not over, as many began to use the carcinogenic metal cadmium as a replacement. What's more, the vast majority of recalled items were never actually returned, meaning toxic jewelry remains on children's dressers.

Lead

The danger most frequently encountered with toys is invisible to even the most watchful parent's eye: lead contamination. Lead is the second most deadly household toxin in existence, after arsenic, and no level of exposure is safe. Yet every holiday season is marked by incidences of children being sickened by lead-tainted toys. One study found a third of all tested toys contained lead. Most were still on store shelves and allegedly passed toy manufacturers' internal tests.

The Unexpected

Nearly a quarter of a million children are treated at U.S. emergency rooms for toy-related injuries every year. Injuries from scooters, choking hazards, and lead-contamination are always in the news, but beyond the headlines lie a myriad of dangers: beads that contain date rape drugs, asbestos and other exotic toxins, baby boats that drop their infant occupants under water, toy helicopters that catch fire, or aromatherapy kits that detonate with acid. Every year brings new hazards to confound even the most cautious parent.

Scooters

Scooters account for approximately a quarter of all toy-related emergency room visits. Most of the more than 220,000 incidents each year comprise falls or accidents involving motor vehicles. But defective scooters have also been blamed for amputated fingers, lacerations, broken arms, wrists, and teeth.

Magnets

Over the last several years, toy manufacturers have increasingly used small, powerful magnets, creating a new category of deadly toys. These magnets can come loose and be swallowed by small children. Unlike other small objects, which are often passed through the body, magnets pose a unique risk. If two or more magnets are swallowed, they can attract to each other through intestinal walls. This can result in pinched, blocked or twisted intestines. The effect is fast and devastating. Magnets quickly erode through the intestinal wall, spilling bacteria into the body. Serious infections, blood poisoning, and even death may result.