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May 12, 2000

More Defective Product Penalties?

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Filed at 2:24 p.m. EDT

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Hillary Rodham Clinton unveiled the president's plan Friday to toughen civil and criminal penalties for companies that fail to notify the government or consumers about potentially dangerous products.

The legislation would upgrade willful criminal violations of product safety laws from misdemeanors to felonies, and eliminate the \$1.65 million cap on civil penalties.

"With this legislation, the punishment will finally start to fit the crime," said Mrs. Clinton, who called million-dollar fines "just a drop in the bucket" with little impact on the profit margins of large corporations.

Although the changes would apply to most consumer products, Friday's announcement focused on children's products.

USA Today reported last month that at least 17 firms had been accused of keeping quiet about dangerous children's products since 1997. CPSC Chairman Ann Brown said she had witnessed "a continuing trend of nonreporting."

Last year, the CPSC assessed \$922,500 in fines, 10 times as much as it did 10 years ago. So far this year, fines have totaled more than \$1.3 million.

In April, toy giant Hasbro Inc. agreed to pay a \$400,000 civil penalty for failing to give consumers and the government timely notification about a defect in an infant carrier.



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Hasbro waited until it had received 12 reports of infant carrier handles spontaneously unlatching, causing seven skull fractures, before informing the government of the problem and recalling the carriers in 1996.

Even after the recall, Hasbro continued to deny that the product had any defects or that the company violated any law.

Mrs. Clinton said Friday that about half the products that eventually face federal recalls are not reported to the CPSC by the companies themselves but come to light through consumer complaints, federal investigations, emergency room records and even coroners' certificates.

Brown added that too often, the CPSC had been forced to rely on its own "detective work."

In one instance last year, there were more than 3,000 complaints against and 42 children injured in a combination child safety seat and infant carrier manufactured by Kolcraft Enterprises before the company agreed to a recall.

Chicago-based Kolcraft never officially reported the defect before the government stepped in and launched an investigation, federal regulators said.

The president's plan also includes an enhanced reporting network, administered by the CPSC, to more effectively bring children's product injury information to the agency's attention.

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Monday, April 3, 2000

THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER

USA TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA... FIRST IN DAILY READERS

Child dangers ignored

17 firms kept problems quiet

By Jayne O'Donnell
USA TODAY

Since 1997, at least 17 companies kept quiet about products that were seriously injuring children until the government stepped in, a USA TODAY investigation finds.

The makers of cribs, infant carriers and other children's products heard complaints — sometimes thousands — from parents. They conducted internal investigations but never told the owners of the products or the government.

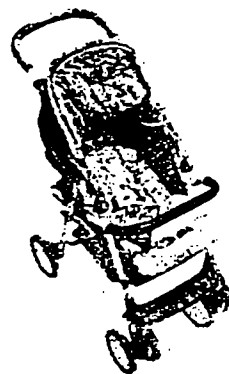
In fact, an analysis of government documents shows that problems with 75% of the most dangerous children's products recalled during the past three years were not reported to the government until the Consumer Product Safety Commission, often alerted by consumers, got involved.

Today, the commission plans to announce a \$400,000 civil penalty against Hasbro for waiting until it had 12 reports of handles unlatching on infant carriers — causing seven skull fractures — before telling the agency about the problem. The carriers were recalled in 1996. Hasbro denies wrongdoing and says it settled the matter to avoid prolonged legal proceedings.

Cosco, a maker of children's products, also might wind up in court on charges it ignored reports about four products, including a crib mattress that the safety commission says trapped 12 babies, killing one. If negotiations fail, the commission could sue Cosco.

Cosco says its recent recalls have involved "complex legal and interpretative issues" and often didn't involve serious injuries.

Hasbro is the sixth children's product company to face civil penalties since early 1998 because regulators say they waited too long to report safety hazards — or never told the government at all.



► When safety is delayed. Special report, 1B

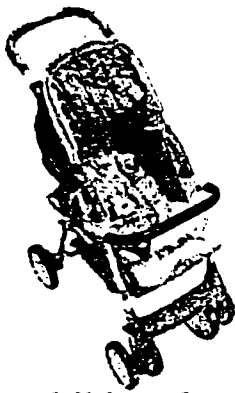


Money

SECTION B

Monday, April 3, 2000

Special report



78 children hurt

Century TraveLite
Sport stroller
CPSC says:

- ▶ 1,400 reports of collapsing strollers
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Playskool Fold N' Travel
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Photos by Tim Dillon, USA TODAY



200 children hurt

Cosco Geoby Two Ways
tandem stroller
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- ▶ 3,000 lock failures
- ▶ More than 200 children injured, including fractures and head injuries
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Suffering in silence

From unsafe strollers to cribs,
companies fail to report flaws that
amputate fingers, fracture skulls

By Jayne O'Donnell
USA TODAY

Alexia Weber was pushing her two children along a South Lyon, Mich., street two years ago when the stroller they were riding in collapsed. Weber, relieved that the 3-year-old girl and 1-year-old boy were not hurt, assumed that she had done something wrong.

Only later did she learn that hundreds of other parents had experienced the same problem with their Cosco strollers — and many were not so lucky. Their children suffered head injuries, broken bones and cut fingers.

To Weber, the most disturbing news was that the Consumer Product Safety Commission says Cosco knew about those incidents but hadn't alerted parents to the potential danger. Cosco didn't tell CPSC about the problem until the agency learned of it on its own. And it didn't recall the stroller until February 1999 — at least a year after it began receiving what turned out to be 3,000 complaints about stroller locks failing and more than 200 injury reports.

This is a pervasive problem in a wide range of products used by children, a USA TODAY investigation shows. Product manufacturers frequently conduct internal investigations but remain publicly silent as complaints about alleged defects pile up. In the past three years, 75% of the most dangerous problems that led to recalls were never voluntarily reported to the government. During that period, there were at least 17 cases in which products stayed on the market while the company gathered reports of children suffering everything from lost fingers to brain injuries, an analysis of CPSC data shows.

"If I had known what happened to the other kids, I wouldn't have bought the thing," says Kristine Kwiecinski, whose 5-week-old son was dumped out of a Playskool carrier four years after CPSC says Hasbro began collecting reports of skull fractures. A lock on the handle could fail, turning the carrier upside down.

CPSC will announce today that Hasbro will



By John Galloway for USA TODAY

Unsuspecting parent: Weber was pushing Katelynn, left, and Nicholas in a stroller when it collapsed. She was pregnant with Meghan, front, at the time.

pay the government \$400,000 in civil penalties because, the agency says, it delayed reporting the carrier problem. Hasbro denies any wrongdoing and says it settled the matter to avoid prolonged legal proceedings.

Lawyers for Cosco and other child-product makers blame vague CPSC reporting rules and say it's difficult to know when complaints stem from a defect or owner misuse.

Federal law says a company must notify CPSC if it receives information that "reasonably supports the conclusion that its product creates an unreasonable risk of serious injury or death."

In the Cosco case, the company didn't think it

Please see SPECIAL REPORT next page ►

Some product makers kept mum for years

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was obligated to report the stroller problems to CPSC "due to the minimal number of reports and the minor nature of the injuries reported," says Cosco General Counsel Jonathan Reynolds.

The 3,000 complaints Cosco received represented 5% of 57,000 stroller owners.

"If someone has thousands of complaints, that's a pretty strong message about the quality or safety of their products," says R. David Pittle, a former CPSC commissioner and now vice president of Consumers Union. "That's not something you can say, 'We didn't know.' That's consumers telling you something."

Every year, more than 70,000 children are injured and about 60 die from injuries suffered in cribs, infant carriers and other non-toy items made just for kids, CPSC says.

"When you're talking about time with dangerous products, you're talking about deaths and injuries," says CPSC Chairman Ann Brown.

The companies put not only their customers but themselves at risk when they dawdle on reporting complaints. Since early 1998, manufacturers of six recalled children's products have agreed to pay the government civil penalties because they waited too long or never reported problems to CPSC. In addition to Hasbro, cited for the Playskool "Fold N' Travel" carrier:

► Baby's Dream Furniture in Georgia agreed to pay \$200,000 in civil penalties in January. CPSC said the company waited until it had eight reports of children having their fingers amputated, cut or crushed in its

Special report

"Generation" oak model cribs before it reported the problem to CPSC. The cribs were recalled in 1998. Baby's Dream President David Felfeli says the company didn't think it was late on reporting the injuries, but settled the matter to avoid court costs.

► Century Products paid \$225,000 in civil penalties in 1998. CPSC said Century was told one child died and five became trapped in its Okla Homer Smith cribs before it reported the problem. The cribs were recalled in 1997. CPSC also said Century had 560 reports of collapsing "Travelite Sport" strollers — including 29 injuries — before reporting. The strollers were recalled in 1997. Century had no comment.

► Safety 1st paid civil penalties of \$175,000 in 1998. CPSC said Safety 1st had 27 injury complaints before it reported toddler bed support rails were breaking and children were dropping to the floor. The rails were recalled in 1995. Safety 1st denied its product was defective and that it knowingly violated reporting rules.

► Coaster paid \$300,000 in civil penalties in 1998. CPSC said it failed to report defects or unreasonable risks in its full-size metal cribs despite independent lab test results showing the defect. Although no injuries were reported, the tests showed that crib slats and scrolls could strangle children and that children could choke on plastic end caps on the scrolls. The

► Binky-Griptight paid \$150,000 in civil penalties in 1998. CPSC said it failed to report defects in Binky's Newborn Orthodontic Pacifiers. The company had six reports of pacifiers separating from the knob, creating a choking hazard, although no injuries were reported. The pacifiers were recalled in 1996. The company denied that it knowingly violated reporting rules.

Ongoing negotiations

In the case of the Cosco stroller, CPSC has been discussing possible civil penalties with the company for about a year. CPSC levies higher penalties for companies that are repeat offenders, and Cosco agreed to pay the government \$725,000 in civil penalties in 1996 after the government sued it for failing to notify CPSC about hazardous toddler beds. If those negotiations fail, CPSC can take the company to court.

Cosco said in a statement to USA TODAY that it analyzed the product design and tested the strollers to ensure that any issues identified were corrected after it received complaints from consumers and retailers. The company also developed a repair kit.

Cosco, along with Kolcraft and Evenflo, has recalled an infant car seat that doubles as a baby carrier over the last two years because the handles released and babies fell to the ground. None of the three reported complaints or injuries until they were asked by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and CPSC, the government says.

By the time it recalled its carriers in December, Kolcraft had 3,000 reports of handle problems with 42 injuries, including a skull fracture and concussions, CPSC says. The agency says Cosco had 151 complaints the handles released, leading to 29 injuries, including skull fractures, and Evenflo knew of 176 carriers with handles that released, resulting in 89 injuries.

Evenflo spokesman Brian Bloom says the company made managerial changes and implemented an "ag-



By Tim Dillon, USA TODAY

On the lookout: CPSC Chairman Ann Brown, director of recalls Marc Schoem, left, and his brother Alan, director of compliance, amid several of the products that the agency discovered on its own were unsafe.

gressive" quality-assurance program after the recall. The company "takes each recall very seriously because the safety of our customers and their families is our top priority," Bloom says.

Cosco blamed most of the carrier injuries on misuse and says federal tests for handles were not approved until after the carrier went on sale.

Kolcraft General Counsel Eileen Lysaught said the handle-related complaints it had in the fall of 1997 — when regulators asked for information — did not suggest a recall was needed. Along with injury reports, some of the handle complaints related to non-safety issues, such as color and smell.

Fuzzy rules?

"I don't think there's any excuse if a company knows something is causing harm to a child to not let CPSC know to help get the word out to parents," says

Karen Sheehan, assistant professor of pediatrics at Northwestern University Medical School.

Lawyers who represent juvenile-product manufacturers blame CPSC regulations and methods for many of the delay problems:

► Peter Winik, an attorney with Latham & Watkins who represents Cosco and other manufacturers, says CPSC's reporting requirements are vaguely written, making it easy to see how companies might not think they need to report a hazard.

"The regulations leave plenty of gray areas for all different interpretations," Winik says. "In an awful lot of cases, the answer isn't clear. I suspect CPSC likes the regs just the way they are."

But Alan Schoem, CPSC's director of compliance, says the regulations are "pretty clear," and that companies simply prefer not to report. He says there is "no magic number" of injuries or complaints that suggests when a company should notify CPSC. But the agency

gives companies from 24 hours to 10 days to investigate complaints and decide if a product hazard, rather than misuse, led to the complaint. He urges any company that is unsure of its reporting responsibility to call CPSC — anonymously, if necessary — to get a reading of the agency's position.

► Former CPSC general counsel Jeffrey Bromme, now a defense lawyer with Arnold & Porter, says CPSC's zeal in areas affecting children can catch some companies off guard.

"If your product has been involved in a child's death or in a horrible injury to a child, the staff is likely to move heaven and earth to get a recall," he told a child-safety conference recently.

Frederick Locker, legal counsel to the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association and the Toy Manufacturers Association, says CPSC sets out to find a defect — and nearly always does — when it is investigating consumer complaints.

"It has to have chilling effect" on companies across the board, Locker says. "They want to encourage people to report insignificant or minor problems, but people think they'll all wind up being treated the same way" as those with deadly problems.

► Michael Brown, a former CPSC general counsel, now a defense lawyer with Brown & Freeston, says some firms complain it's difficult to predict how consumers might misuse a product and don't think they should be blamed for consumers' mistakes.

For instance, the handles on the combination car seat-infant carriers were unlocking when people propped them against their hips, CPSC says.

The companies considered it improper use of their products. But CPSC says the manufacturers should have known people would do that. The agency considered the lock failure in that position a defect.

"Say you make 3 million of something, and four people complain. Does that mean the design of the whole product is wrong?" asks Brown. "The government's answer is you should always come talk to us, but most of the time it's just a customer-satisfaction issue."

Alexia Weber disagrees.

When she called Cosco about the stroller that collapsed with her children in it, the company told her there was nothing wrong with it. But when she returned the stroller to the store, it wasn't being sold there anymore because management decided it was unsafe — even though it hadn't yet been recalled.

"It's scary that parents can have kids that have been injured after the company knew it was a problem, but decided, 'It's so rare,'" says Weber. "It's scary that companies can get away with it."

Web sites offer data on products' safety

Even the most diligent parent would have trouble keeping up with the children's product recalls announced every year. Here are the best bets for getting information:

► www.cpsc.gov: Includes all the recalls of infant and children's products, toys, household products and other consumer items announced since 1989. Recalls can be searched by name of product, company or product category. You can also sign up to be on CPSC's mailing list to get recall notices faxed or mailed. CPSC's hotline can be reached at 800-638-2772.

► www.nhtsa.gov: Has everything you need to know about child safety seats. You can search the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Web site for recalls, complaints and investigations related to any brand or model of child seat. (CPSC's site has only child seats that double as infant carriers.) Also includes tips on proper use of child safety seats. Information can also be obtained by calling 800-424-9393.

► www.registrationvillage.com: Allows consumers to register all their products in exchange for recall updates through e-mail or letters. Consumers also can search for historical recall data on any new purchases they make.

► www.parentsoup.com: Offers a "Consumer Reports" board in the "Around the House" center, which is designed for parents who have found products they "can't live without" and ones they "want everyone to avoid."

► www.momsonline.com: Check "Product Watch" board in the "Homespace" area for information on recalls and other information moms want to share about their children's products.

By Jayne O'Donnell

Monday, April 3, 2000

THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER



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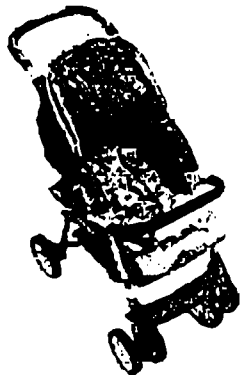


Money

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Special report



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Photos by Tim Dillon, USA TODAY



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Suffering in silence

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USA Today, April 3, 2000, 1B

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To Weber, the most disturbing news was that the Consumer Product Safety Commission says Cosco knew about those incidents but hadn't alerted parents to the potential danger. Cosco didn't tell CPSC about the problem until the agency learned of it on its own. And it didn't recall the stroller until February 1999 — at least a year after it began receiving what turned out to be 3,000 complaints about stroller locks failing and more than 200 injury reports.

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By John Galloway for USA TODAY

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Lawyers for Cosco and other child-product makers blame vague CPSC reporting rules and say it's difficult to know when complaints stem from a defect or owner misuse.

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Some product makers kept mum for years

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"When you're talking about time with dangerous products, you're talking about deaths and injuries," says CPSC Chairman Arin Brown.

The companies put not only their customers but themselves at risk when they dawdle on reporting complaints. Since early 1998, manufacturers of six recalled children's products have agreed to pay the government civil penalties because they waited too long or never reported problems to CPSC. In addition to Hasbro, cited for the Playskool "Fold N' Travel" carrier:

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By Tim Dillen, USA TODAY

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Even the most diligent parent would have trouble keeping up with the children's product recalls announced every year. Here are the best bets for getting information:

► www.cpsc.gov: Includes all the recalls of infant and children's products, toys, household products and other consumer items announced since 1989. Recalls can be searched by name of product, company or product category. You can also sign up to be on CPSC's mailing list to get recall notices faxed or mailed. CPSC's hotline can be reached at 800-638-2772.

► www.nhtsa.gov: Has everything you need to know about child safety seats. You can search the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Web site for recalls, complaints and investigations related to any brand or model of child seat. (CPSC's site has only child seats that double as infant carriers.) Also includes tips on proper use of child safety seats. Information can also be obtained by calling 800-424-9393.

► www.registrationvillage.com: Allows consumers to register all their products in exchange for recall updates through e-mail or letters. Consumers also can search for historical recall data on any new purchases they make.

► www.parentsoup.com: Offers a "Consumer Reports" board in the "Around the House" center, which is designed for parents who have found products they "can't live without" and ones they "want everyone to avoid."

► www.momsonline.com: Check "Product Watch" board in the "Homespace" area for information on recalls and other information moms want to share about their children's products.

By Jayne O'Donnell

NEWS from CPSC

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Office of Information and Public Affairs

Washington, DC 20207

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2000

Release # 00-085

CPSC CONTACT: William J. Moore, Jr.

(301) 504-0626 Ext. 1348

Hasbro Pays \$400,000 Civil Penalty for Delay in Reporting Infant Carrier Defect

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced today that Hasbro Inc., of Pawtucket, R.I., paid a \$400,000 civil penalty to settle allegations that it violated the Consumer Product Safety Act by failing to timely report defects with its "PLAYSKOOL baby FOLD'N TRAVEL" infant carriers. Playskool Baby is a division of Hasbro.

CPSC alleges that Hasbro failed to report in a timely manner that the carrier's handle locking mechanism could fail, causing the seat to flip forward and infants to fall to the ground. Hasbro received nine injury reports, including seven serious head injuries, before it reported to CPSC. In agreeing to settle this matter, Hasbro denies that the product contained a defect and that Hasbro violated any law.

About 38,500 of these carriers were sold nationwide from 1991 to June 1993 for approximately \$35. The infant carrier has a sleeping, sitting and rocking position and a handle for carrying baby out and about. Each carrier has the words "PLAYSKOOL baby FOLD'N TRAVEL" on a label where the handle connects to the seat.

Hasbro recalled the "PLAYSKOOL baby FOLD'N TRAVEL" carriers in 1996. Consumers still can participate in the recall by calling Hasbro toll-free at (800) 752-9755 anytime to receive a full \$35 refund. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission protects the public from the unreasonable risk of injury or death from 15,000 types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, you can go to [CPSC's forms page](#) and use the first on-line form on that page. Or, you can call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or send the information to info@cpsc.gov. To order a press release through fax-on-demand, call (301) 504-0051 from the handset of your fax machine and enter the release number. Consumers can obtain this release and recall information from CPSC's web site at www.cpsc.gov or by calling the hotline or sending your request to info@cpsc.gov. You can also subscribe to CPSC's [email subscription list](#) which normally sends all press releases the day they are issued.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2000 • USA TODAY

Millions of weed trimmer heads recalled for dangerous chain flaw

By Jayne O'Donnell
USA TODAY

About 3.5 million weed trimmer heads are being recalled today because the metal chain links can fly off at speeds up to 240 miles an hour and injure or kill people.

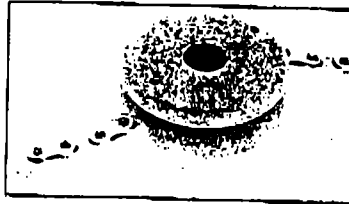
A 3-year-old girl was killed and 40 others have been injured when they were hit by the flying metal from Weed Wizard trimmer heads with metal chains.

In August 1997, Peyton Pytlewicz of Dothan, Ala., was playing when she was hit in the skull by a metal link as her grandfather was trimming weeds 35 feet away.

"The metal link becomes a deadly piece of shrapnel," Consumer Product Safety Commission Chairman Ann Brown says.

Weed Wizard Acquisition of Bradley, Mich., which acquired the product after the child's death, settled a lawsuit by her family for \$7.35 million last year.

Spokesman Kevin McGrath says an engineering consultant conclud-



Weed Wizard: Chain links have become deadly projectiles.

ed that the incidents wouldn't have occurred if the product had been used according to instructions.

There were at least 12 reported accidents before the death, according to family attorney Sam Cherry of Cochran, Cherry, Givens and Smith. Most of those injuries were flesh wounds.

The company never reported the death or injuries to the agency, which is investigating whether Weed Wizard Acquisition should face civil penalties.

"It's a case that illustrates what can happen when a company is not reporting their accident histories,"

Cherry says. "The public is at peril for potentially dangerous products."

A USA TODAY analysis last month showed that 75% of the most dangerous child-product problems that led to recalls never were voluntarily reported to the government. That percentage is believed to apply to all products.

The Weed Wizard being recalled has a metal chain trimmer head that replaces the string trimmer head on gas-powered trimmers.

The Weed Wizards with metal chains were sold from May 1987 through April of this year for \$19 to \$25. The replacement chain kits were sold from January 1992 through April of this year for \$8. They were sold in stores and on TV.

Consumers should stop using the Weed Wizards with metal chains immediately and contact the firm to obtain free plastic replacement blades and installation instructions. For a free replacement kit, call Weed Wizard at 888-810-7536 or check www.weedwizard.com.

**U. S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION****WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207****Fax Message Cover Sheet**Date: Mar 5, 2000 Time: 10:30☐ Fax To (Name): Heather Howard☐ Fax Number: (202) 456-2878☐ Voice Phone Number: _____From: **Office of the Executive Director**Name: Pamela GilbertVoice Phone Number: (301) 504-0550Fax Number: (301) 504-0121

Subject: _____

Number of Pages to Follow: 6

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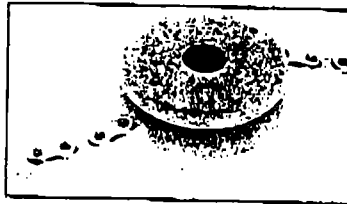
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7 million infant swings being recalled

By Jayne O'Donnell, USA TODAY

About 7 million infant swings are being recalled today by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the swings' manufacturer, Graco, because babies can be strangled when proper restraints aren't used.

Six children died after becoming tangled in the waist belts and strangling, and 181 children have fallen from the swings. Of these, nine infants sustained serious injuries, including bone fractures and concussions.

At least 22 infants were caught at the neck or chest as they fell but weren't injured.

The safety commission says consumers should stop using the swings immediately.

The swings, which were made from the 1970s through January 1998, often are sold secondhand and without a removable tray that connects to a crotch strap. If babies slide down in the seat, the only thing keeping them from falling out of the swing is the waist belt, which also can strangle them.

Five of the six deaths involved secondhand swings.

There have been six recalls of infant swings since 1995, including a Century recall in 1997 for a similar problem.

Under the Graco recall, which is one of the five largest involving non-toy children's products, swing owners will receive new safety restraints with a buckle that makes sure the crotch strap is used whenever the waist belt is buckled.

Owners should call Graco at 800-934-9082 to find out whether their swings require new restraints.

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NEWS from CPSC

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Office of Information and Public Affairs

Washington, DC 20207

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2000

Release # 00-085

CPSC CONTACT: William J. Moore, Jr.

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Hasbro Pays \$400,000 Civil Penalty for Delay in Reporting Infant Carrier Defect

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The New York Times

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Filed at 4:13 p.m. EDT

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Graco Children's Products Inc. said Thursday it would provide new safety restraints for about 7 million infant swings after six children died because of faulty or misused restraints, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The restraints on swings made before November 1997 consist of a waist belt only and a hinged removable tray, which serves as a restraint. If swing parts are missing, the restraints are not used or the tray comes off, infants can slip down into the seat and strangle or fall from the swing, the commission said.

In five of the six deaths, swing owners had bought their swings second hand and the restraints were either missing or not used, the panel noted.

Of the 209 incidents reported to the commission, 181 involved infants falling from the swing. Nine of the falls resulted in either bone fractures or concussions, while 22 infants were caught at the neck or chest, the commission said.

The battery-powered or windup swings come in either A-Frame or open-top design. Some models have removable seats which double as an infant carrier.

The Elverson, Pa.-based company's replacement kit has a buckle that assures the usage of the crotch strap which will fasten infants securely in the swings, the commission said.

Mass merchandisers, juvenile products stores and major discount

Adverti

stores sold the swings nationwide through January 1998 for between \$70 and \$120.

Consumers should stop using these swings immediately and call Graco at 1-800-934-9082 anytime for a free safety restraint. Consumers can also visit www.gracobaby.com on the Internet or write to Customer Affairs, Graco Children's Products Inc., P.O. Box 100, Elverson, Pa., for the restraint upgrade.

Ask questions, give answers and tell other readers what you know. Join [Abuzz](#), a new knowledge network from The New York Times.



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Child dangers ignored

17 firms kept problems quiet

By Jayne O'Donnell
USA TODAY

A1

Since 1997, at least 17 companies kept quiet about products that were seriously injuring children until the government stepped in, a USA TODAY investigation finds.

The makers of cribs, infant carriers and other children's products heard complaints — sometimes thousands — from parents. They conducted internal investigations but never told the owners of the products or the government.

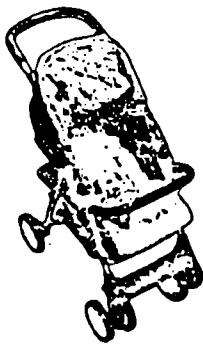
In fact, an analysis of government documents shows that problems with 75% of the most dangerous children's products recalled during the past three years were not reported to the government until the Consumer Product Safety Commission, often alerted by consumers, got involved.

Today, the commission plans to announce a \$400,000 civil penalty against Hasbro for waiting until it had 12 reports of handles unlatching on infant carriers — causing seven skull fractures — before telling the agency about the problem. The carriers were recalled in 1996. Hasbro denies wrongdoing and says it settled the matter to avoid prolonged legal proceedings.

Cosco, a maker of children's products, also might wind up in court on charges it ignored reports about four products, including a crib mattress that the safety commission says trapped 12 babies, killing one. If negotiations fail, the commission could sue Cosco.

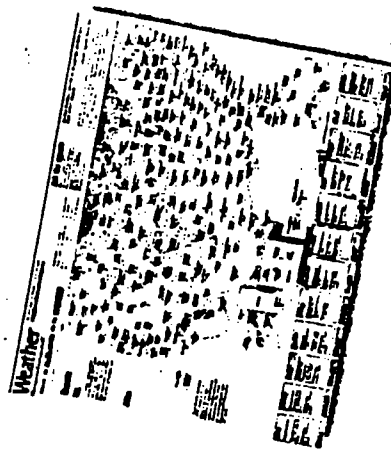
Cosco says its recent recalls have involved "complex legal and interpretative issues," and often didn't involve serious injuries.

Hasbro is the sixth children's product company to face civil penalties since early 1998 because regulators say they waited too long to report safety hazards — or never told the government at all.



► When safety is delayed. Special report, 1B

USA TODAY's new look designed for readers



USA TODAY

Updated favorites: Revamped Weather page is part of USA TODAY's new look. Complete guide, 27A

the 21st century. If you do, please tell us. And if you don't, please tell us that, too. Your feedback is important. You can call us at 800-872-2215 or e-mail editor@usatoday.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Karen Jurgensen, editor

► An updated look for a new time. USA TODAY was originally designed in 1982 by the same Richard Curtis who headed the 2000 team. We realize the media environment in which readers live is a far busier place than it was 18 years ago. That calls for a newspaper that is as clear and succinct in its design as its words. For example, there's now only one headline type, adding to the newspaper's uniformity and readability.

► An improved weather page with more cities and forecasts. ► Improved stock listings and additional financial reports. We believe the new design builds on the trustworthy, accessible and complete news report readers expect from USA TODAY. Plus all the features you count on in News, Money, Sports and Life are right where they always are.

A complete explanation of the changes appears on page 27A. We hope you like the USA TODAY of today.

► A new typeface that is easier to read. Because the type is taller and skinnier, it helps to compensate for the loss of space resulting from the smaller page. And we've added half an inch to the length of the page. In testing, the team actually had to add stories to some pages because of the extra space created.

► A team headed by Managing Editor of Graphics and Photography Richard Curtis carefully looked at changes that would improve USA TODAY without dropping stories, photos or graphics that are important to our 5.4 million daily readers. The team challenged everything about the old design, making sure the new one still delivered a quick, authoritative read on the day's events in News, Money, Sports and Life. Today is the result of their months of hard work.

Here's what the team came up with:

Dear Readers,
Welcome to a new USA TODAY for a new era.

Some of you are getting the full effect of our redesign with the narrower paper. Others are seeing the new narrower design printed on the old width of paper. In about six months, most copies of USA TODAY produced at our 36 worldwide print sites will be on the narrower paper.

In focus groups, readers tell us the narrower width is handier — especially in tight spaces such as airplanes.

We're shrinking the width of the paper because it is becoming the new newspaper industry standard. While changing the width of the page 1.25 inches may not seem like a lot, it required us to adjust our design. Simply shrinking the old image would have distorted shapes such as faces and the type would have been difficult to read. Cutting content due to the reduced space

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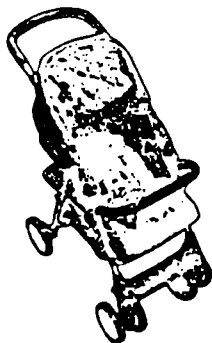
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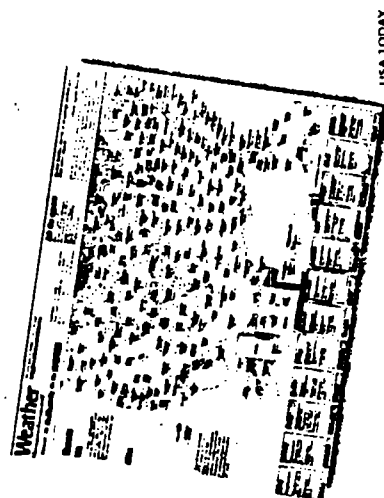
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Sincerely,
Karen Jurgensen, editor

Presidential land decrees seen as anti-democratic

By David Judson
Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — To the applause of environmentalists and the chagrin of many local interests, President Clinton may sometime this month declare 400,000 acres of the southern Sierra a new "Sequoia National Monument" off-limits to mining, logging and perhaps other activities.

Protecting land with a presidential decree is controversial for its lack of congressional or local involvement. It is not, however, a policy limited to the Sierra.

Clinton has also locked up vast areas of Idaho, Utah, Colorado and Arizona with such designations since 1993. He is also contemplating more such declarations in California, Oregon, Colorado, Arizona and Montana.

"Can we do it legislatively? Or must we do it by the more traditional method, by presidential proclamation?" Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt asked rhetorically in February. Babbitt went on to answer that with the clock ticking in a presidential election year, there's no other choice but executive fiat.

In many ways, the debate has all the trappings of a cultural war: urban environmentalists vs. rural ranchers, hunters or motorcyclists; protection of national interests vs. local ones.

To environmentalists, such action under an arcane 1906 law known as the Antiquities Act is often the only way to protect areas from exploitation when local commercial interests can derail preservation efforts that go through Congress.

"The fact is that Congress, for better or worse, is often prey to



Babbitt: More designations expected.

small but vociferous interest groups on these kinds of environmental protection issues," said Neil Lawrence, senior lawyer for the Natural Resources Defense Council and head of an environmental coalition seeking the Sequoia designation.

"This kind of protection is overwhelmingly popular with the American public, but opponents tend to be loud, boisterous and well-organized."

To the local groups and individuals who have often used public lands for generations, however, the action is an anti-democratic land grab that will lock out many people from areas that have long been used for hunting, grazing and small-scale mining and logging.

Nancy Geehan, a former U.S. Forest Service manager who is now a land-use consultant in Wyoming, argues that a broadly based "multiple use" policy for public lands, a policy that has protected the environment as well as nurtured unique local economies over the past century, is simply being ravaged.

Her views mirror those of lawmakers, from Utah to California, who have decried the process under Clinton as an outright usurpation of their authority.

The issues involved are extraordinarily complex. The land involved is public but has been used in many cases for nearly a century by ranchers or live-off-the-land miners and loggers whose lifestyles have become integrated with the landscape. Geehan argues that those are cultures and elements of a local economy due as much consideration as landscapes and wilderness. In fact, she argues, they are wholly compatible with resource conservation: "Humans are a part of the ecology," she argues.

Environmentalists agree only to a point.

"When the full spectrum of multiple use plainly degrades the resources, it is wholly appropriate to eliminate some — but by no means all — of those uses," Lawrence said.

Babbitt has suggested that this is a debate to be held after the monument designations are made — not before. Mining and logging are likely to be curtailed, but some traditional uses such as hunting may prevail.

While the government maintains no formal list of likely monument designations, Babbitt has said in speeches and interviews that a number of areas are under contemplation before the Clinton administration ends its term next January. Locations Babbitt has mentioned include Steens and Soda mountains in Oregon; the Canyon of the Ancients in southern Colorado; the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains near Palm Springs and the Carrizo Plains in central California; Empire Ranch near Tucson, Ariz.; and the Missouri Breaks, a canyon area at the headwaters of the Missouri River in Montana.

Babbitt has also suggested expansions of both the Colorado National Monument and the Great Sand Dunes National Monument in Colorado.

Child dangers ignored

17 firms kept problems quiet

By Jayne O'Donnell
USA TODAY

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Since 1997, at least 17 companies kept quiet about products that were seriously injuring children until the government stepped in, a USA TODAY investigation finds.

The makers of cribs, infant carriers and other children's products heard complaints — sometimes thousands — from parents. They conducted internal investigations but never told the owners of the products or the government.

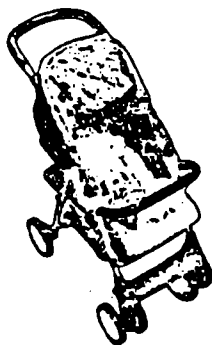
In fact, an analysis of government documents shows that problems with 75% of the most dangerous children's products recalled during the past three years were not reported to the government until the Consumer Product Safety Commission, often alerted by consumers, got involved.

Today, the commission plans to announce a \$400,000 civil penalty against Hasbro for waiting until it had 12 reports of handles unlatching on infant carriers — causing seven skull fractures — before telling the agency about the problem. The carriers were recalled in 1996. Hasbro denies wrongdoing and says it settled the matter to avoid prolonged legal proceedings.

Cosco, a maker of children's products, also might wind up in court on charges it ignored reports about four products, including a crib mattress that the safety commission says trapped 12 babies, killing one. If negotiations fail, the commission could sue Cosco.

Cosco says its recent recalls have involved "complex legal and interpretative issues," and often didn't involve serious injuries.

Hasbro is the sixth children's product company to face civil penalties since early 1998 because regulators say they waited too long to report safety hazards — or never told the government at all.



► When safety is delayed. Special report, 1B