

CHILD SAFETY BLOG

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Manufacturers dither while toddlers get strangled in window-blind cords

With an average of one child every two weeks strangled on the cords of window blinds, it's no wonder that the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has asked manufacturers to come up with a way to eliminate the risks to children from the cords or possibly face mandatory regulations.

In response, window blind manufacturers, working with a task force of regulators and consumer advocates, say they will come up with a fix by the fall. The decision to speed

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up work on solving the problem comes after an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) revealed that 49% of the deaths of children who strangle in window cords go unreported.

The article, which was co-authored by a CPSC staff member, estimates that the total number of window cord strangulations in the U.S. from 1981 to 1995 was 359 (i.e. one child strangling in window cords every 2 weeks). Most of the deaths (93%) are children 3 years and under.

Although window blind makers already install safety features and offer tips to parents to try to minimize the dangers from their products, critics complain that the manufacturers have dragged their feet on addressing safety hazards for decades, making minor tweaks or putting the onus on parents to shorten cords or buy tie-down devices, while regulators have done little to crack down.

In the current negotiations, manufacturers of window blinds have offered several fixes that they say would reduce the hazards, but consumer advocates on the task force say they are inadequate and have threatened to quit. “It was my understanding that we were eliminating the hazard,” said Carol Pollack-Nelson, a safety consultant and member of the task force. “Now they are talking about reducing the hazard. We don’t want reduced strangulation. We want no chance of it.”

CPSC regulators also rejected the industry’s proposals and urged the manufacturers to try again. Inez Tenenbaum, the commission’s chairwoman, emphasized that the commission staff plans to continue negotiating with manufacturers to find a solution.

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One solution to the problem – cordless blinds -- has been available for several decades, but they are more difficult to produce and can cost twice as much as corded blinds. Due to the additional cost, CPSC also wants the task force to find cheaper alternatives, such as retractable cords or cords that are covered and therefore inaccessible to children.

Source: [The New York Times](#)

You can read the latest news release on window-blind safety from CPSC [here](#), and the abstract of the JAMA article [here](#).

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