



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 21, 2017

CONTACT:

Grace Magee, 718-551-4309 (cell)

32nd Annual “Trouble in Toyland” Survey Finds Dangerous Toys on Store Shelves Expert Tips Can Help Parents Shop Safely

New York City— Stores nationwide are still offering dangerous and toxic toys this holiday season. In some cases, stores ignore explicit government safety regulations in the process, according to the New York Public Interest Research Group’s (NYPIRG) 32nd annual Trouble in Toyland report. The survey of potentially hazardous toys found that, despite recent progress, consumers must still be wary when shopping for children’s gifts.

The report exposes fidget spinners full of lead, inadequately-labeled toys and balloons that pose a choking hazard, and data-collecting toys that may violate children’s privacy and other consumer protection laws. We also provide a list of toys that have been recalled over the past year.

“Our leaders need to do more to protect kids who do not have the voice to protect themselves. No child should have a source of joy eventually be a source of pain,” said Daniel Malpica, parent and student at Queens College.

For more than 30 years, the NYPIRG *Trouble in Toyland* report has offered safety guidelines for purchasing toys for small children, and has provided examples of toys currently on store shelves that pose potential safety hazards. Over the years, our reports have led to more than 150 recalls and other enforcement actions.

“As a parent and advocate I strongly feel the work that NYPIRG is doing to ensure that the toys and products on shelves are safe for children is very important,” said Christine Serdjenian, founder of UP-STAND.

“I’m glad that this report helps me watch out for common toxins in children’s toys. It is difficult to trust anything these days after knowing what can cause harm and illness to my own kids” said Tina Miller, parent and student at Bronx Community College.

Key findings from the report include:

- **Lead:** We found two fidget spinners from Target which had dangerously high levels of lead, well over the federal legal limit of 100 parts per million (ppm) for lead in children’s products. We tested for lead at a lab which is accredited by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

- Fidget Wild Premium Spinner Brass which we purchased at Target and is distributed by Bulls i Toy, L.L.C.: the center circle tested for 33,000 ppm of lead, which is more than 300 times the legal limit for lead in children’s products.
- Fidget Wild Premium Spinner Metal which we also purchased at Target and is distributed by Bulls i Toy, L.L.C.: the center circle tested for 1,300 ppm of lead.
- On November 10th, Target announced that it will be removing the two fidget spinner models from its store shelves. Target had initially balked at our request to do so, citing a CPSC rule stating that general use products directed at adults don’t need to follow the same lead guidelines as children’s products directed at children 12 and under. The two models of fidget spinners we found were labeled for ages 14 and up. Our staff found them in the toy aisles at four Targets around the country. At the time of testing, the Target.com website even included a statement that the Fidget Wild Premium Spinner Brass is recommended for children ages 6 and up, which was misleading.
- Now, the CPSC, Target, and Bulls i Toy need to ensure that these two fidget spinners are recalled, so that people who have already purchased the products won’t suffer any health consequences from playing with them.
- **Small Parts:** Despite a ban on small parts in toys for children under the age of three, we found several toys that contain small parts, but do not have any warning label at all. These included a peg game, golf, and football travel games that we found at Dollar Tree.
- **Balloons** are easily inhaled in attempts to inflate them and can become stuck in children’s throats. Balloons are responsible for more choking deaths among children than any other toy or children’s product. We found five balloon sets on store shelves from Dollar Tree (H2O Blasters – Water Balloons and Disney Princess Punchball Balloons), Party City (Mega Value Pack 12 Water Bomb Packs and Mega Value Pack 14 Latex Punch Balloons), and Dollar City Plus (Party Balloons - 10) that are either marketed to children under eight or have misleading warning labels that make it appear that they are safe for children between ages three and eight.
- **Data-Collecting Toys:** As toymakers produce more and more products that are part of the “Internet of Things,” data collection and the sharing of consumer information become greater concerns. For example, we list a doll, “My Friend Cayla,” which we found at Wal-Mart and Kohl’s, which has been banned in Germany for privacy violations and is the subject of a complaint by several consumer groups to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission because it may violate the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act. In July, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued a warning to consumers to “consider cybersecurity prior to introducing smart, interactive, internet-connected toys into their homes.”

“Even small amounts of lead in toys can be ingested when transferred from fingers to mouth or from fingers to food,” said national lead expert Helen Binns, MD, pediatrician at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago and Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. “Lead harms the developing brain and is easily ingested through normal hand to mouth behaviors. Beware of these 2 fidget spinners, as they have dangerous amounts of lead.”

“The CPSC, manufacturers, and retailers should classify all fidget spinners as children’s products and hold them to federal lead limits. It’s simply common sense,” said Grace Magee, NYPIRG Consumer Advocate. “And to prevent children from being exposed to lead-laden toys in the future, the CPSC needs to revise its loose and arbitrary regulations for determining the age range of a product.”

Even though many hoverboards have been taken off store shelves over the past year, they continue to pose dangers to children. Earlier this year, two young girls and a firefighter tragically died from a house fire that was believed to be caused by a hoverboard that was charging and overheated. And just last month, another house fire was believed to be caused by a hoverboard. Numerous hoverboards continue to be recalled by the CPSC for faulty battery packs.

In a victory for consumers, the CPSC in October issued a final rule prohibiting children's toys and child care articles containing more than 1,000 ppm of five additional phthalate chemicals (DINP, DPENP, DHEXP, DCHP, and DIBP). Phthalates are a group of chemicals used to soften and increase the flexibility of plastics such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and certain phthalates have been linked to altered development of the male reproductive system, early puberty, and cancer.

Parents and caregivers can also take steps to protect children from potential hazards. We recommend that parents:

- Subscribe to email recall updates from the CPSC and other U.S. government safety agencies available at www.recalls.gov;
- Shop with NYPIRG's Toy Safety Tips, available at toysafetytips.org;
- Report unsafe toys or toy-related injuries to the CPSC at SaferProducts.gov;
- Review the recalled toys in this report and compare them to toys in your children's toy boxes;
- Remember, toys on our list are presented as examples of potentially-dangerous toys. Our list is not exhaustive and other hazards may exist;
- Put small parts, or toys broken into small parts, out of reach. Regularly check that toys appropriate for your older children are not left within reach of children who still put things in their mouths;
- Eliminate small magnet hazards from your home;
- Be aware that toys connected to the Internet, as well as apps and websites, may be collecting information about children inappropriately. Learn more about the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA);
- Make sure that the hoverboards you own contain a UL2272-certification sticker from the product-testing group Underwriters Laboratories. However, even UL2272 compliance cannot guarantee that a hoverboard will not overheat or catch fire.

View our full *Trouble in Toyland* report at www.nypirg.org. Parents can find our list of unsafe toys, as well as tips for safe toy shopping this holiday season, at toysafetytips.org.

###

NYPIRG is an independent, non-partisan group that works for consumers and the public interest. Through research, public education and outreach, we serve as counterweights to the influence of powerful special interests that threaten our health, safety, or well-being.