



Consumer Corner

by Illinois Attorney General LISA MADIGAN



Children's Product Recalls

How to Get the Information You Need to Protect Your Kids

Each year, consumer products ranging from clothes to toys are recalled because they pose a safety hazard to children. Unfortunately, parents and caretakers are often unaware of these recalls, leaving too many dangerous products in the hands of children. Consumers can obtain the latest information about unsafe children's products, if they know where to look. A recent change in the law has expanded this access. In this month's column, I highlight the resources available to help you keep dangerous children's products out of your home or business.

Q. *I am a new mother. How do I know if the items I buy and the gifts I receive for my child have been the subject of a recall?*

A. From time to time, a governmental agency or a manufacturer will recall a product deemed dangerous to children. A major challenge of these recalls is ensuring that every affected consumer receives notice. At present, there are no federal requirements for posting recall notices in retail stores or on Web sites. Consequently, parents and caretakers are often unaware that a children's product in their home has been recalled.

Fortunately, Illinois has enacted laws that make it easier for parents to keep their children safe from dangerous products. In 1999, Illinois became the first state to ban the resale of dangerous children's products and their use in child care facilities. This year, my office helped pass legislation that will greatly improve the way merchants and consumers receive notice that a product is dangerous. Senate Bill 526, which amends the Children's Products Safety Act, makes notification easier by requiring information about a recall to be posted clearly in the stores and on the Web sites that sold the product.

Under Senate Bill 526, you now have access to the

most current recall information about products intended for use by children under age nine. This means that whether you buy a children's product yourself or receive it as a gift, you can find out if it has been recalled by looking for notices on the manufacturer's or retailer's Web site, or in a store that sold the item. Additionally, Illinois consumers who purchased the product online will receive notification of the recall by mail or e-mail.

For up-to-date information about all past and current recalls, you should visit www.recalls.gov. While there, you can sign up to receive e-mail notifications of recent recalls. A non-profit organization called Kids In Danger also sends out monthly e-mail alerts on dangerous products, which you can sign up for by visiting www.KidsInDanger.org or calling 312-595-0649.

The Office of the Illinois Attorney General has enforcement authority under the Children's Products Safety Act. If you believe a merchant is failing to comply with the notification requirements of the Act, please report your concerns to my office at the numbers listed below.

For more information on child safety, including tips to prevent lead poisoning and unintentional injuries, please visit my Web site at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/children/index.html.

ATTORNEY GENERAL LISA MADIGAN'S CONSUMER FRAUD HOTLINES

Chicago
1-800-386-5438
1-800-964-3013 (TTY)

Springfield
1-800-243-0618
1-877-844-5461 (TTY)

Carbondale
1-800-243-0607
1-877-675-9339 (TTY)