



PRODUCT RECALLS

EU Member States take action against dangerous cords and drawstrings on children's clothing

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Long cords and drawstrings on children's clothing present a serious risk to children. Therefore market surveillance authorities from 11 Member States have run a joint action to decrease the exposure of children to these risks by removing dangerous clothes from the market. Measures have been taken against more than 1,400 garments so far.

The National Consumer Agency took part in this joint action, and visited 21 shops and inspected 640 items of clothing.

Eighteen items were removed from sale as a result of not complying with the European standard. The standard covers clothes for children up to 14 years of age.

Since August 2008, PROSAFE and 11 Member States have participated in a joint action on children's clothing with cords and drawstrings. Every year, accidents happen to children around the world due to the presence of cords and drawstrings in clothes.

In some cases, the accidents can be fatal. Long strings in hoods or collars may strangle a child if they get around the neck or get stuck in playground equipment, and long strings on the back of a garment may get caught in a bus door when the child alights, causing severe injuries if the bus driver doesn't notice and starts the bus.

The joint action organises a half-day workshop on 30 November in Brussels to present the results and findings.

Even though the action does not end before February 2010, reports from the participating Member States show that the level of activity has been very high:

More than 3,500 inspections have been carried out, mainly at retailers

The participants have checked more than 11,000 garments

Measures have been taken against more than 1,400 garments. Two-thirds were for small children (0-7 years) and the rest for children up to 14 years

The most common non-compliance was related to cords and drawstrings in the hood and neck area. It accounts for some 60% of cases. Cords and drawstrings in the chest and waist area accounted for another 20%

Customs have inspected some 60 consignments with clothes, as part of their border control. The European Commission has received more than 250 RAPEX notifications on dangerous children's clothes from January to August 2009, almost five times more than the same period last year.

Work by participants in the joint action has assisted in focusing attention on the risks posed by cords and drawstrings in children's clothes and has undoubtedly contributed to the increase in RAPEX notifications.

Advice to consumers

Despite the activities of the market surveillance authorities, it is foreseeable that consumers may come across non-compliant clothes in shops or in their possession. Parents or other relatives may also themselves submit clothes for children.

The participating market surveillance authorities therefore have issued the following six recommendations:

Six recommendations on children's clothes

Clothes for children up to seven years (height 1.34 m) should not have cords or drawstrings in the hood and neck area

Clothes for children between seven and 14 years should not have cords longer than 75 mm in the hood and neck area or drawstrings with free ends. Cords in the hood and neck area should not be elastic except for shoulder straps and halter necks

Clothes for children shall not have cords or drawstrings with free ends longer than 140 mm in the chest and waist area

Halter neck-style children's clothes should not have loose ends in the hood and neck area

Children's clothes intended to be tied at the front should not have tied belts or sashes longer than 360 mm, when measured untied from the point where they are to be tied

Other cords or drawstrings on children's clothes should not trail below the sleeve or hem of garments. Drawstrings, functional cords and decorative cords at the bottom hem of long-legged trousers shall be totally on the inside of the garment

Homemade children's clothes should also meet the above requirements.

If you already possess children's clothes that fail to meet the above requirements you should remove or cut off the cord or drawstring.

You can also exchange the garment at the store where you bought it and warn the seller of the risks posed by the garment.

Cords are strings that are fixed to the garment. Drawstrings are strings that pass through a channel or loops on the garment.

Background

The joint action is coordinated by PROSAFE, "The Product Safety Enforcement Forum of Europe". It is a non-profit organisation bringing together market surveillance officers from all over Europe and across the world.

The joint action is supported financially by the European Commission, DG SANCO.

According to the General Product Safety Directive, any product that is placed on the European market must be safe. This is obligatory for producers, importers and retailers.

Cords and drawstrings on children's clothes are presumed to be safe if they meet the requirements of the European standard EN 14682 "Safety of children's clothing – Cords and drawstrings on children's clothing – Specifications".

The RAPEX reports on those children's clothes presenting serious risks to the consumer can be found on the [European Commission's website](#)