



IMPROVING
CHILDREN'S
PRODUCT
SAFETY



**Consumers
Union**
POLICY & ACTION FROM
CONSUMER REPORTS

U.S. PIRG
Federation of
State PIRGs

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Contact:
Rachel Weintraub, CFA (202) 387-6121
William Wallace, CU (202) 462-6262
Carol Pollack-Nelson, ISC (301) 340-2912
Nancy Cowles, KID (312) 595-0649
Linda Kaiser, PFWBS (314) 494-7890
Ed Mierzwinski, PIRG (202) 461-3821

Four Children Killed by Window Covering Cords in last Six Weeks Holiday Warning for Consumers with Children: Go Cordless

Washington D.C.—Today, Parents for Window Blind Safety, Consumer Federation of America, Kids In Danger, Consumers Union, U.S. PIRG and Independent Safety Consulting, urged parents to be cautious this holiday season and to make sure that the window coverings in their homes are cordless, in light of four children's deaths in the past six weeks.

In a recent twenty-nine day period, four children strangled to death from cords on a window covering: a 4-year-old boy, in Chicago Ridge, Illinois, on November 12, 2016; a 4-year-old girl in Salt Lake City, Utah, on November 29, 2016; a 4-year-old girl in League City, Texas, on December 7, 2016; and a 3-year-old boy in Cleburne, Texas, on December 10, 2016. Each of these children died after the cord of a window covering strangled them. In 2016, we are aware of a total of 11 window cord strangulation deaths. These most recent tragic incidents contribute to the already long list of 293 deaths and serious injuries associated with these products between 1996 and 2012.

Fatality data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reveals that since 1983, 12 children have strangled to death each year when they became caught in loops formed from the cords on window coverings. The rate of injuries and deaths has not been significantly reduced since 1983,¹ despite six industry attempts at revising their voluntary standards. The seventh revision of the voluntary standard is currently underway and we are hopeful that it will be a step in the right direction.

¹ CFA 2011 Press Release. <http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/WindowCoveringsStandardPressRelease.pdf>

“These window covering strangulations are so complicated but the most important factor is that it happens to the best of parents. Parents who trusted that either tying up cords, cutting cord short or using break away devices would prevent their children from death,” stated Linda Kaiser, founder and president of Parents for Window Blind Safety. “It is paramount that consumers use window coverings with no pull cords in their homes.” Linda Kaiser and her husband Matt formed Parents for Window Blind Safety in 2002, after their daughter, Cheyenne Rose, died as a result of being strangled by a window blind cord.

“This holiday season and every day, we urge families to make sure that cords on window coverings are not accessible to children,” stated Rachel Weintraub, Legislative Director and General Counsel at Consumer Federation of America. “When purchasing new window coverings we urge parents to buy cordless products.”

“Cords and kids don’t mix. Use only window treatments without accessible cords,” stated Nancy Cowles, Executive Director of Kids In Danger. “It is the only 100% effective way to eliminate this hazard.”

“It is outrageous that for decades the window covering industry has failed to enact a strong standard to protect kids,” said Ed Mierzwinski, U.S. PIRG Consumer Program Director. “For parents, the recommended fix is simple: Go cordless.”

“These terrible tragedies can happen quickly and silently,” said William Wallace, policy analyst for Consumers Union, the policy and mobilization arm of Consumer Reports. “We urge manufacturers and retailers to sell only those products that do not pose a risk of strangulation to children.”

“I am saddened that young children continue to strangle in window blind cords. This is a fixable hazard. I am hopeful that the next version of industry’s voluntary standard will lead to a real change and a reduction in these deaths,” stated Carol Pollack-Nelson, Ph.D., a product safety expert and President of Independent Safety Consulting.

The CPSC has long recognized window covering cords as a hidden strangulation and asphyxiation hazard to children and continues to identify it on its website as one of the “top five hidden hazards in the home.” The most vulnerable children are infants through eight years of age.

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Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education.

Consumers Union is the policy and mobilization arm of Consumer Reports, an independent, nonprofit organization that works side by side with consumers to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world. As the world’s largest independent product-testing organization, Consumer Reports uses its more than 50 labs, auto test center, and survey research center to rate thousands of products and services annually. Founded in 1936, Consumer Reports has over 7 million subscribers to its magazine, website, and other publications.

Kids In Danger (KID) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children's product safety. KID's mission is to promote the development of safer products, advocate for children and educate parents and caregivers about dangerous children's products.

Parents for Window Blind Safety is a nonprofit organization that supports parents whose children have been seriously injured or killed by dangerous cords, educates consumers about the dangers of accessible window covering cords in homes, daycare facilities, and military housing, helps create safer standards in the industry, encourages innovation of safer products in the industry, and tests window covering products for safety.

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