

International toy safety standards expected

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In Europe, toy manufacturers are obliged to follow the safety requirements specified in the European standards (e.g. EN 71 series). In many countries outside Europe, manufacturers must instead comply with the requirements set out in the international standards for toy safety (ISO 8124 series). The ISO standards on toy safety were discussed during a weeklong meeting with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in Tokyo at the end of October 2012.



The ISO meeting in Tokyo was attended by around 50 experts from 16 countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Thailand, the UK, Sweden and the USA).

Below follows a summary of the topics discussed at the meeting:

Mechanical and physical properties

Activity toys for domestic use: In 2010 a new standard, ISO 8124-4, was published specifying requirements for activity toys for private use (swings, slides, etc.). Currently, work is underway to update this standard for 'paddling pools'. The starting point is the requirements already placed on these toys in the corresponding European standard.

Projectiles, rotors and propellers: The requirements for toys that can launch projectiles have not changed significantly over the years, but many new types of such toys have been made available on the market. ISO is therefore working on a complete review of the requirements and test methods. The hope is that this work will provide the basis for a future revision of the corresponding requirements in Europe.

Cords, strings etc.: The requirements in the European standard for cords, strings, electrical cables, etc. changed in 2011. These requirements now form the basis for an update of the corresponding ISO standard.

Toys presenting a fall-on hazard: In the US, there have been accidents and deaths where children have had an object of a particular size and shape in the mouth and then fallen so that the object has been

forced down the throat and become lodged. Therefore, in 2008, the US introduced new requirements into the ASTM standard F 963. The requirements have been modified slightly since then, and the goal of ISO is to introduce the modified ASTM-requirements in 8124-1.

Flammability

In connection with the entry into force of the new Toy Safety Directive in Europe, the standard for flammability was updated (EN 71-2). This updated version is now the basis for the updating of the corresponding standard within ISO.

Total concentration of certain heavy metals in toy material

At present, the requirements for maximum migration of eight heavy metals from toy materials are virtually identical in the US, Europe and in the ISO standard. They will, however, be changed in Europe from 20 July 2013. A new ISO standard for determining the total content of these eight heavy metals in toy materials will enable manufacturers, for example, to determine if more expensive migration tests are needed (if the total concentration is less than the allowable migration there is no need to perform the migration tests).

Total concentration of phthalates in toy material

In many parts of the world, there are requirements for the maximum concentration of certain phthalates (used for example as plasticisers in some plastics). However, there is a no common test method in place for determining the total concentration. The ISO standards will, when published, be useful in many parts of the world.

Age determination guidelines

It is not always easy to determine for which age group of children a certain toy is suitable. By developing guidelines for age determination, there is hope that the ISO group will create conditions for age determination to be made uniformly across the globe.

About TIE

Toy Industries of Europe (TIE) is the trade association for the European toy industry, which comprises over 25% of the total world toy market. The toy industry is highly international and is one of the most dynamic business sectors in Europe. Around 80% of the sector is composed of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) which have less than 50 employees. Members of TIE include corporate companies as well as national associations from Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the Nordic region. TIE membership is open to both corporate companies with a presence in Europe and national associations from European Union Member States (including candidate countries).

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