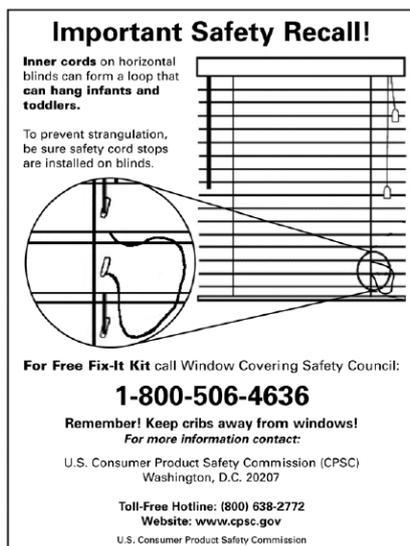


WINDOW BLIND SAFETY

A claim brought against a Pennsylvania Public Housing Authority brings back attention to the choking hazard created by the cords on horizontal window blinds. The incident involved the strangulation death of a four year old, who became entangled in a venetian blind cord.

From 1991 to 2000, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) received reports of 160 strangulations involving cords on window blinds: 140 strangulations involved the outer pull cords, and 20 involved the inner cords that run through the blind slats. In 1994, CPSC worked with the window covering industry to redesign new window blinds to eliminate the outer loop on the end of the pull cords and provide free repair kits so consumers could fix their existing blinds. Window blinds sold since 1995 no longer have pull cords ending in loops.



In 1999, CPSC began a new investigation of window blind deaths. In an extensive review of incidents, CPSC found that children could also become entangled in the **inner** cords that are used to raise the slats of blinds. These entrapments occur when a young child pulls on an inner cord and it forms a loop that a child can hang in. All of these deaths involved children in cribs or playpens placed next to windows. In most cases, the outer pull cords were placed out of reach, but the children still strangled when they pulled on the inner cords of the blinds. The strangulation victims ranged in age from 9 months to 17 months.

As a result of the CPSC investigation, the industry has further redesigned window blinds. Window blinds sold since November 2000 have attachments on the pull cords so that the inner cords cannot form a loop if pulled by a young child. Consumers with blinds bought before November 2000 should repair them immediately.

Consumers who have window blinds with loops should immediately visit WCSC (windowcoverings.org/20.html) or call 800-506-4636 to receive a free repair kit for each set of blinds. The repair kit includes small plastic attachments to

prevent inner cords from being pulled loose. Instructions for cord stop installation are easy and repair can be done in minutes without removing blinds.

If your Authority installed window blinds at any time prior to the past three years, they should be checked for compliance with this requirement. Materials at the website can also be distributed to residents to raise their awareness.

The incident points out the importance of not only requiring that contractors provide certificates of insurance, but also adding the Public Housing Authority as an additional named insured.

For further assistance on this matter or other safety and risk control issues, contact your risk management consultant or Jim Rhoads, NJPHA-JIF safety consultant (610-397-5061).

IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by PMA Companies in this risk control technical guide are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter the information and suggestions to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.