

MEDIA RELEASE

16 August 2010

Nearly half of toys tested by CASE were found to contain harmful chemicals

A test of 50 toys conducted by CASE in July 2010 found that 23 of them (46%) failed chemical toxicological tests and were found to contain higher than permitted levels of phthalates, lead or both. The permitted levels on phthalates and lead were determined using US and international regulatory standards. These standards were used as Singapore does not have a test standard for toy safety.

The tests were conducted by Insight Laboratories. The company specialises in testing of children's toys and products based on various international standards. Insight Labs is accredited and certified to ISO 17025 standards and recognised by ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board. Its facility is also approved by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Toy Safety Certification Program (TSCP).

CASE commissioned the test following the incident in February 2010 where some students suffered from food poisoning as they did not wash their hands properly after handling a bean toy. The bean toy was later found to contain two types of phthalates.

For the tests, CASE purchased 50 toys randomly from the different parts of Singapore and sent them for testing. This included toy shops in the town and heartlands areas. The toys selected for the test included the following:

- 1) Bright and/or colourful paint on the toy (indication of possible presence of excessive lead contents)
- 2) Plastic toys that are soft and pliable in texture (indication of possible presence of excessive phthalates)

While the survey was not intended to be representative of all the toys sold in Singapore as it would be practically impossible to test all toys with CASE's current resources, the findings were worrying nonetheless. Out of the 23 toys that failed chemical tests, 16

exceeded the limit for phthalates, 3 exceeded the limit for lead, while 4 exceeded the limit for both phthalates and lead.

According to US regulatory standards, the permissible limit for phthalates is 0.1%weight/weight, while that for lead in accessible substrate materials is 300 part per million(ppm). International regulatory standards specify that the limit for lead in paint/similar surface coating materials is 90 ppm.

The same toys were also subject to physical, mechanical and labelling tests conducted using the American Society of Testing and Materials Standards (ASTM) F963-08 for toy safety.

The findings included:

- 1) There were five toys that failed physical or mechanical tests. Out of these, 2 toys posed a potential choking hazard to young children because the components of the toy could easily be detached. 2 toys failed the design requirements for a toy gun, in which special toy gun markings are required to ensure the toy is not mistaken for a real firearm. The other toy failed physical tests as its packaging did not meet the minimum thickness required by the standards.
- 2) We also noted that many of the toys did not have proper labelling. Such labels include the country of origin, name and address of manufacturer and/or distributor, as well as the age limit that the toy is suitable for.

As a safety precaution, CASE has written to those retailers whose toys had failed the tests. They have been informed of the toys that have failed chemical and/or physical and mechanical tests. At the same time, CASE has urged them to take proper actions to ensure that toys sold at their premises comply with known safety standards. The retailers were also advised to recall affected toys and stop selling them.

CASE would like to urge manufacturers and distributors to ensure that their toys comply with known toy safety standards for chemical contents. It is also critical that manufacturers and distributors include proper labelling on their toys, especially to

indicate the minimum age limit that the toy is suitable for. Without proper labelling, it is difficult for parents to determine whether a toy poses a potential hazard to children, especially if it contains small parts or with parts that are easily detachable.

Members of the public who have come into contact with those toys that CASE found to contain excessive lead or phthalates and have experienced symptoms such as diarrhoea, nausea, stomachache and vomiting should seek medical help immediately. Consumers who have bought the affected toys should keep them out of reach of their children and approach the relevant retail business for further assistance.

CASE has also been lobbying the authorities for some time to put in place more regulations for product safety, particularly children's toys. We understand that the authorities are currently reviewing the legislations to give consumers better protection with regards to product safety.

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Toy Test Survey- July 2010

Toys that failed chemical toxicology test (excessive lead and/or phthalates)



