

Brussels, 16 August 2007

Consumers: Mattel expands recall of Chinese toys

The European Commission confirmed today that Mattel Inc. has expanded its recall of dangerous toys in Europe. This is the second large-scale recall within two weeks of toys of Chinese origin, highlighting the risks of lead pigments and those of magnets in toys. On 14 August 2007, the Commission received information from Mattel that a new recall was imminent. In accordance with the EU legislation, receiving such notifications is the competence of the Member States, who in turn inform the Commission. The Commission ensures that the same information reaches the appropriate authorities of all the other Member States, who have the responsibility of enforcing corrective measures if adequate voluntary steps are not taken. Two RAPEX notifications were subsequently received from the British Authorities concerning voluntary recall by Mattel of a number of dangerous toys.

Consumer Protection Commissioner Meglena Kuneva expressed her satisfaction that the danger posed by these toys was detected by the producer in its own audits and that the company acted responsibly. "Cooperation among producers and authorities is key to product safety, and more vigilance is needed from both sides to live by the rule that no compromises are accepted in this area."

One notification concerns the "Sarge" character from the "CARS" die-cast vehicle line, manufactured between May 2007 and July 2007, which contains illegal levels of lead. The number recalled amounts to 436,000 toys globally, 253,000 in the United States and 183,000 in the rest of the world including the EU. The toy was produced by one of Mattel's contract manufacturers in China.

The other recall notification relates to magnetic toys manufactured between January 2002 and 31 January 2007, including various Polly Pocket, Doggie Day Care and Batman toys and an accessory part of Barbie & Tanner toy. These toys may release small, powerful magnets that can then be swallowed or aspirated by young children or placed by a child in their nose or ears. When more than one magnet is swallowed, the magnets can attract each other and cause intestinal perforation, infection or blockage, which can be fatal. Aspiration to the lungs requires immediate surgery. Magnets in nose or ears can cause swelling and be difficult to remove. Mattel is recalling 18.2 million magnetic toys globally. The majority of these toys have already been sold, hence the importance of consumer information. The recall follows an earlier voluntary recall by Mattel of eight toys in November 2006.

Background

On 3 August 2007, the European Commission received a RAPEX notification from the British Authorities concerning the voluntary recall launched by Mattel (Fisher Price) of toys produced in China using a paint pigment containing unauthorised levels of lead. The notification listed 83 Nickelodeon and Sesame Street toys which were made by a contract manufacturer in China.

The toys were sold in 11 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom, and in Croatia and Switzerland. According to Mattel, the majority of the stock was still in warehouses and the number of toys that had reached consumers (at least in certain countries) was very low.

The Commission immediately forwarded the RAPEX notification concerning Fisher Price toys to the competent authorities of 30 European countries participating in RAPEX. The national authorities are closely cooperating with Mattel to ensure that none of these dangerous toys are left on the market. For more information of this recall, please visit http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons_safe/index_en.htm. The products notified today come from a different factory and were therefore not found in the same investigation.

The magnetic toy notification has its own history. On 23 November 2006, the British Authorities submitted a RAPEX notification to the European Commission concerning eight different models of Mattel's Polly Pocket Magnetic Play sets (B2632-Polly Place Hanging out House, B3158-Polly Place Treetop Clubhouse, B3201-Spa Day, B7118-Polly Place Totally Tiki Diner, G8605-Quik Klik Boutique, H1537-Quik Klik City Pretty Playset, H1538-Quik Klik Sporty Style Playset, H3211- Totally Zen Playset). Mattel voluntarily recalled these toys containing small powerful magnets as they present a serious risk of internal injuries. For more information of this recall, please visit <http://ec.europa.eu/rapex>. According to Mattel, it has implemented enhanced magnet retention systems in its toys and more rigorous testing since this campaign, as a corrective measure agreed with the product safety authorities.

What is RAPEX

RAPEX is an EU-wide rapid alert system for non-food dangerous consumer products, coordinated by the Commission and linking market surveillance authorities in 30 European countries. When authorities or producers themselves take corrective actions (stop of sales, withdrawal from the market, recall from consumers) concerning a product posing a serious risk for the health and safety of consumers, the authority receiving the information from the producer or on its own initiative imposing mandatory measures must notify the Commission which validates the notifications and distributes them to the authorities in all other Member States. There is then a formal obligation on Member State Authorities to check whether the product in question is present on their national market, take appropriate action if that is the case and inform the Commission of the results of their market surveillance activities.

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/index_en.htm

Contact : Helen Kearns +32 2 29 87638, Antonia Mochan + 32 2 29 69921