



Wooden toys 2019

Investigation on the safety requirements of wooden toys

Wooden toys must satisfy European safety requirements in order to ensure that the risk of unsafe situations is prevented. The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) has conducted an investigation into whether or not wooden toys on the consumer market in the Netherlands satisfy the requirements for toys. The emphasis was placed on the particularly stringent requirements for toys intended for children under the age of three, which seek to prevent the risk of choking, entanglement and perforations from, among other things, small parts, cords, small balls, hemispherical toys, figurines and magnets. As wooden toys often contain components bonded together with adhesives, the adhesive joints and the strength of those joints were also tested. These joints must remain intact during mouthing behaviour by children, falls, knocks, external impact and other mechanical impact.

Background

Between 2018 and 2019, the NVWA investigated compliance with the legal frameworks for wooden toys, following the results of an investigation which suggested that approximately 22% of wooden toys investigated in the laboratory were non-compliant (source: MBS, 2008 – 2017).

Risks

Toys intended for children under the age of three are used by small children who are seen as a highly vulnerable group of users. In the event that the toys do not satisfy the mechanical and physical requirements, there is a risk of choking and entanglement, among other things. In the event of a serious hazard, the toy could lead to permanent injury or even fatal injury.

Procedure

Products

In 2018, the NVWA sampled 269 different products in the category of wooden toys. The products were selected on the basis of as many different brands and importers as possible. In addition, the products were also selected from physical and online sales points. This provided a representative picture of the market.



Figure 1: Example of a random wooden toy that was not necessarily assessed by the NVWA.

Sample choice

The investigation focused on wooden toys intended for children under the age of three, as this target group is vulnerable. As a consequence, particularly stringent requirements apply to toys intended for this target group.

In order to obtain a representative picture of the market, samples were taken from both physical sales points and online stores.

The items forming part of the investigation and the testing methods used were presented to the businesses from which the samples were taken beforehand. These items are available on the website of the NVWA: www.nvwa.nl

Investigation

The wooden toys were investigated in the laboratory of the NVWA in accordance with the relevant European standard.¹

These tests have been developed to test the mechanical and physical properties of toys by means of tensile strength and fall tests, the strength of joints and the size of any loose parts or parts that may come loose during the test, among other things.

The latter is determined by placing the parts in a test cylinder; if the parts fit inside the test cylinder fully without resistance, they are classified as "small parts". These parts pose a high risk of choking.

Finally, the NVWA also assessed the following references on the wooden toys:

- CE marking;
- Identification details of the manufacturer.

Legal requirements

Wooden toys must meet the European requirements for toys set out in Directive 2009/48/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the safety of toys and the Dutch Toys (Commodities Act) Decree 2011. Harmonised standard EN 71-1:2014 Safety of toys – Part 1: Mechanical and physical properties may be used in the implementation of the aforementioned standards.

¹ European harmonised standard EN 71-1:2014

Results

A total of 269 wooden toy products were assessed, and 159 products (59%) were fully compliant with the legal requirements with regard to the items investigated. In the other products, a range of deficiencies were found.



Figure 2: Overview of results of the investigation into wooden toys

Age classification

When determining the age and target group of children for which the toy is suitable, on the basis of the functions and characteristics of the toy, it was found that 29 of the products had a warning affixed incorrectly. This means that the toy should have also been suitable for children under the age of three.

Small parts

Loose parts in toys or parts that come loose during the test must not pose a risk of choking. Small parts were found to be present in 57 of the investigated products.

Cords

If a cord is used, it must not lead to entanglement, choking or strangulation. If this risk is present nevertheless, a deficiency exists. This was the case with seven of the investigated products.

Small balls

Small balls were found in two of the products. If swallowed, these balls could block the airway and cause a choking hazard.

Figurines

Only one of the products contained figurines that were not compliant with the requirements.

Hemispherical toys

No deficiencies were observed in this category.

Magnets

Only one of the products contained magnets that were not compliant with the requirements.

Suction caps

No deficiencies were observed in this category.

Shape and dimensions

In 11 products, the shape and dimensions of toys intended for children who are too young to sit upright independently did not meet the requirements.

Warning sentence "Not suitable for children younger than 3 years of age" or equivalent symbol

Of all of the products investigated, the warning sentence or symbol had been affixed to 30 products incorrectly.

Warning sentence "Not suitable for children younger than 18 months of age. Long cord/long chain. Risk of entanglement."

No deficiencies were observed in this category.

CE marking

The CE marking must be present on the toy, on a label attached to the toy or on the packaging. This was not the case for 26 of the products investigated.

Name and address of the manufacturer and/or importer

This information must be present on the toy or, if this is not possible, on the packaging or on a document accompanying the toy. This information was absent from 34 of the products investigated.

Corrective measures

The NVWA has imposed a measure on all of the companies involved and has instructed that they are required to end sales and inform their customers and end users as quickly as possible. The sale of these products is prohibited.

Conclusion

Within the investigation of 269 wooden toy products, 159 products (59%) were assessed as compliant with the legal requirements with regard to the items investigated. In the other products, a range of deficiencies were found to exist.

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