



EU rules on consumer safety

Summary: The EU has established a network among member states which allows them to notify each other of consumer products that pose a serious risk to health and safety.

Thirty European countries and the European Commission have joined forces to create the rapid alert RAPEX network which enables them to notify each other of consumer products that pose a serious threat to consumers' health and safety (food and medicines are covered by their own Rapid Alert Systems).

This arrangement prevents the offending products from being brought into the country, marketed or has them recalled if already on the shelves.

The EU report ***Keeping European Consumers Safe*** issued in the spring of 2007 states that over 900 products were taken off the shelves across the EU in 2006. A quarter of them were targeted at children. They included teddy bears with dangerous metal spike to a superman doll coated with poisonous lead paint.

Every Friday the EU publishes a list of products found to be sub-standard, in that they comply neither with the Toys Directive nor with EU product health and safety standards.

Many of these are toys that pose risks of choking, suffocation, injuries etc and come from outside Europe, typically China. Such products are either stopped at customs or withdrawn by the importer. The latest list can be accessed by visiting:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/dyna/rapex/rapex_archives_en.cfm

See also:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/toys/2008_108_directive.htm