

Safe, satisfying toys should ride with Santa

By PAT BORDMAN

A child is injured. A toy is recalled. What happens? Who oversees? There is someone who goes into the stores to check the toys. She shops just as any other customer. She scans the shelves. She picks up an article here, looks at it, replaces it. She chooses another and keeps it. Shirley Moore, consumer affairs specialist with the Consumer Product Safety Commission, is not making selections for a birthday party. She is making for danger. The items she keeps are hazardous. Perhaps a part too small, a point too sharp. The gun slide, listen to the noise. The little one, it's really loud. All the bikes have reflectors. Don't look at the trikes, there are no regulations for them. On to the check-out. She pays just as any other customer. The store manager doesn't even know she's been there. Her purchases will never be gift wrapped or played with. These purchases go to a tester. If Ms. Moore is right, these toys will be removed from the shelves before another child is injured.

EACH YEAR about 43,000 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries. Choosing items for their children's fun and entertainment, many parents make the mistake of choosing toys with no thought to their potential for harm. Diversity and volume is a major part of the toy problem.

There are approximately 150,000 different toys on the market at any time. Because this is one of the most competitive of industries, the toy manufacturers produce fresh, new, and different selections every year to try and lure sales. Each year 5,000 new toys arrive on the shelves and 80 percent fail. Competition is tough.

Mistakes and miscalculations are possible and this makes the toy industry vulnerable, especially in the area of testing. Unless thorough and careful testing is done with children and toys together, the company may not learn of unexpected and dangerous applications of a particular toy.

Thus government surveillance of new toys is described by Ms. Moore as "a phenomenal task and one that really cannot be done adequately."

THE CPSC concentrates its checking

of toy products in the late fall of the year. This coincides with the seasonality of the toy industry, which makes about 80 percent of its sales in the last quarter of the year.

"We are concerned with safety 12 months out of the year," said Ms. Moore. "We only focus on toys three months of the year," said Ms. Moore. "We only focus on toys three months of the year, October and November and December. People are generally shopping for toys more during this period of time than any other time during the year."

The CPSC has been in existence since 1973 and is an independent regulatory agency that reports directly to Congress. The agency can order recalls, levy fines and set standards.

Since 1973 it has been developing standards for the manufacture of toys,

but this has been a slow process. So far standards have been established only for noise, sharp edges and points, and electrical and thermal toys. Standards for small parts will take effect in 1980.

The CPSC at one time issued a "banned products" list. This was dropped several years ago. The consumer now has no way to check a particular item to see whether it has been banned or recalled by the agency. It is possible that a banned product could be on a store shelf.

"The toy manufacturers have become quite sophisticated and quite careful about the toys they manufacture now," said Ms. Moore. "Generally the retailer does not want to be responsible for any damage to anyone."

TOY INSPECTION is not done at the manufacturing level. "We check the

toys only after they get on the shelves," reported Ms. Moore.

In addition to surveillance by investigators, the CPSC relies on complaints from consumers and monitors death certificates to find deaths involving consumer products. It also monitors reports from hospital emergency rooms, through the National Electronic Surveillance System, of accidents involving consumer products. That means that in most cases a toy must cause an injury before its danger is discovered.

"We like," said Ms. Moore, "to emphasize the need for selectivity in getting toys for children."

Debby Belian of Southfield exercises selectivity as she shops with daughter, Mary Ann, age 5.

Care in the selection of her children's toys is a real consideration for this mother. "Now they're out of the stage

where sharp objects and small objects are a factor, but I do look at edible paints and there are sharp objects that are still a problem. So I do watch the toys that they get."

IT IS NOT ALWAYS in the manufacture of a toy that a problem can occur. Even after checking a toy carefully for safety defects, one cannot be sure of its safety once in the home.

"You must remember that there's always that single isolated incident in which a child can misuse a toy and suffer an injury or even death," warned Ms. Moore.

One toy has just been recalled for that very reason. The Holly Hobby Toy Telephone so resembled the real thing, that several children plugged in the cord to electrical outlets and were burned.

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Danielle Doyon of Pontiac is not phased by the move to electronic toys. She is entranced by rows of stuffed animals in the Southfield Toys 'R' Us store. All kinds of toys are subject to rigid government surveillance for possible danger to children. (Staff photo by Mindy Saunders)

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Musicians join talents for Handel's 'Messiah'

Professional musicians, both vocal and instrumental, will combine their talents with the Faith Covenant Church choir for a performance of Handel's 'Messiah' Sunday.

The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. at 16 in the North Farmington High school auditorium, 32900 13 Mile in Farmington Hills. There is no charge to attend the oratorio.

The group was brought together by Gerald Jacoby, director of instrumental music for West Bloomfield High school and choir master for Faith Covenant Church.

Soprano soloist is Connie Grubaugh, 44, instructor at Oakland University. Sheila Mack, who has toured Europe as the Wayne State University Chorus Singers, will be the alto soloist.

James Wilkining of Wayne State University's music department has been selected as tenor soloist, and Larry Brock, a newcomer to this area, will be the bass soloist.

The instrumental portion of the concert will be provided by a varied group of professional musicians, and the choral portion will be sung by the choir of Faith Covenant Church, all under the direction of Jacoby.

The church has been in Detroit for 65 years and is now in the process of building new facilities at the corner of 14 Mile and Drake roads in Farmington Hills.

During the moving process, the congregation holds Sunday worship services in North Farmington High School and is using office space at 32910 13 Mile in Farmington Hills.

Marjorie Johnson, speaking for the congregation, said, "It is the hope of the congregation that music lovers and those eager to enter into the true holiday spirit will accept this invitation to an evening of inspiring Christmas music."

Vets must apply for appeals

U.S. military veterans separated prior to 1985 who want a review of an undesirable discharge must file before Jan. 1, 1986.

Veterans may obtain information on how and where to apply by contacting state veterans offices, veterans organizations or the Red Cross. Additional information may be obtained from military personnel offices.

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