

US Federal and State Lead Regulations Still Being Debated

The children's products industry in the United States continues to find itself in a regulatory predicament as it awaits the outcome of the proposed CPSC Reform Act as well as pending state product safety legislation. At least 16 states have passed new requirements regulating children's products while Congress continues to debate the finalities of the CPSC Reform Act. Both the House and Senate have agreed to lower the lead limit, currently 600 ppm, but disagree on when the new limit would take effect. Debate continues on whether or not to include other chemical restrictions in addition to lead. Also to be determined is the age at which children's products would apply: age 7 or age 12.

Many of the new state requirements include restrictions for other chemicals such as phthalates and lower lead levels that are stricter than the proposed federal bill. Differences in state laws will make compliance more difficult and costly for toy manufacturers, distributors and retailers. Increased costs for product testing will inevitably be passed on to the consumer. Some larger retailers have also implemented their own safety standards instead of waiting for Congress to come to an agreement.

While toy manufacturers support uniform safety standards, they disagree with some of the points in the federal bill. One section of the bill is the inclusion of a database of manufacturing facilities and suppliers involved in violations of consumer product safety standards. Manufacturers argue that the database could provide a forum for baseless claims by competitors. Until the federal requirements are finalized, toys continue to be designed for 2009 without clear regulatory guidelines.

STR offers analytical expertise in lead content testing. Our hazard prevention program for toys includes comprehensive safety testing, audit, inspection as well as responsible sourcing services. For more information, contact us at inquiry@strus.com.

(Source: Trottman, Melanie, and Elizabeth Williamson. "Children's Product Industry Put in Regulatory Bind". Wall Street Journal 18 June 2008; A3)