

NEWS from CPSC

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

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CPSC Finds Lead Poisoning Hazard for Young Children in Imported Vinyl Miniblinds

WASHINGTON, D.C. After testing and analyzing imported vinyl miniblinds, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has determined that some of these blinds can present a lead poisoning hazard for young children. Twenty-five million non-glossy, vinyl miniblinds that have lead added to stabilize the plastic in the blinds are imported each year from China, Taiwan, Mexico, and Indonesia.

CPSC found that over time the plastic deteriorates from exposure to sunlight and heat to form lead dust on the surface of the blind. The amount of lead dust that formed from the deterioration varied from blind to blind.

In homes where children ages 6 and younger may be present, CPSC recommends that consumers remove these vinyl miniblinds. Young children can ingest lead by wiping their hands on the blinds and then putting their hands in their mouths. Adults and families with older children generally are not at risk because they are not likely to ingest lead dust from the blinds. Lead poisoning in children is associated with behavioral problems, learning disabilities, hearing problems, and growth retardation. CPSC found that in some blinds, the levels of lead in the dust was so high that a child ingesting dust from less than one square inch of blind a day for about 15 to 30 days could result in blood levels at or above the 10 microgram per deciliter amount CPSC considers dangerous for young children.

"Some of the vinyl blinds had a level of lead in the dust that would not be considered a health hazard, while others had very high levels," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. "Since consumers cannot determine the amount of lead in the dust on their blinds, parents with young children should remove these vinyl miniblinds from their homes."

CPSC asked the Window Covering Safety Council, which represents the industry, to immediately change the way it produces vinyl miniblinds by removing the lead added to stabilize the plastic in these blinds. Manufacturers have made the change and new miniblinds without added lead should appear on store shelves beginning around July 1 and should be widely available over the next 90 days.

Stores will sell the new vinyl blinds packaged in cartons indicating that the blinds are made without added lead. The cartons may have labeling such as "new formulation," "nonleaded formula," "no lead added," or "new! non-leaded vinyl formulation." New blinds without lead should sell in the same price range as the old blinds at about \$5 to \$10 each. CPSC recommends that consumers with young children remove old vinyl miniblinds from their homes and replace them with new miniblinds made without added lead or with alternative window coverings. Washing the blinds does not prevent the vinyl blinds from deteriorating,

which produces lead dust on the surface.

The Arizona and North Carolina Departments of Health first alerted CPSC to the problem of lead in vinyl miniblinds. CPSC tested the imported vinyl miniblinds for lead at its laboratory. The laboratories of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and the Army's Aberdeen Test Center used electron microscope technology to confirm that as the plastic in the blinds deteriorated, dust formed on the surface of the blind slats. This testing also established that the dust came from the blinds and not from another source. CPSC laboratory tests confirmed that this dust contained lead.

"This lead poisoning is mainly a hazard for children ages 6 and younger," said Chairman Brown. "Adults and older children generally are not at risk because they are not likely to ingest lead dust from the blinds."

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at www.cpsc.gov/talk.html. Consumers can obtain this release and recall information at CPSC's Web site at www.cpsc.gov.