

On the **safe** side

Team TnP speaks to leading experts in toy safety as we kick off the year with the first of our quarterly updates

In the first of our quarterly safety features this year, TnP spoke with Malcolm Horner, Toy Technical Consultant at Bureau Veritas; Rob Hinchcliffe, UK Toys & Hardlines Business Line Manager at Intertek; Keith Richards, Technical Director, European Toys and Children's Products, UL and Wendy Phillips, Managing Director of Toy Safety Experts Ltd, to find out how manufacturers have responded to the Toy Safety Directive and what safety legislation is on the horizon

Malcolm Horner, Toy Technical Consultant, Bureau Veritas Consumer Products Services



Has the recently changed directive had a direct impact in the way companies are manufacturing and testing their products?

The chemical requirements of the Toy Safety Directive have made some toy companies rethink their approach to compliance strategy. At Bureau Veritas, we believe in the risk-based philosophy which encourages companies to focus their testing budget on materials which are most at risk on non-compliance. This is why we have helped the British Toy & Hobby Association (BTHA) develop Toyograph, an online tool enabling companies to use a Bill of Materials (BOM) to determine which materials are at risk of containing restricted chemicals above the limits specified in legislation or at levels that may be a safety concern.

Should the safety of a product be used more as a selling point of a toy?

Consumers expect all toys to be safe. Most reputable companies are going the extra mile to ensure their toys are safe and compliant and good quality. These reputable companies might want to educate the consumers on the quality assurance steps they take in order to differentiate themselves from the less reputable toy companies.

What forthcoming changes in safety should people be aware of?

EN71-1 has recently been revised with new acoustic requirements (EN 71-1: 2011 + A2:2013). These new requirements will take effect after the transition period which will end on 30th September 2014. The major change to the standard is the introduction of new requirements for toys not previously within the scope of the standard, such as percussion toys and wind toys such as drums, xylophones and whistles. Revised test methods have also been introduced for voice toys such as megaphones and walkie-talkies.

Wendy Phillips, Managing Director of Toy Safety Experts Ltd.



Should manufacturers, distributors and retailers communicate changes in safety to consumers?

With regards to the safety of products, the Toy Safety Directive does not require this. Obviously if anyone finds a safety issue with a product they communicate this by recalling the toys. This can be done in various ways, notices in stores, newspaper adverts or social media for example. With regards to changes in safety legislation, there is no need to communicate changes to consumers. Just because a new piece of legislation comes into force, this does not make any products sold before the new rules unsafe. If you think of cars, there have been many safety updates over the years, it would not make sense to recall or withdraw cars made before a change to a lighting requirement is made for example.

Has the recently changed directive had a direct impact in the way companies are manufacturing and testing their products?

Yes it has. There is more emphasis on the chemicals that can be found in toys and there is an explicit need to ensure "conformity of series production". Both these things mean that companies are

needing to find other, better ways of showing that their toys comply other than the traditional finished product testing. More emphasis is being placed on ensuring the supply chain is managed and that raw materials are controlled.

Can you explain what a Bill of Materials does and doesn't prove, and what the benefits are?

The BOM is not sufficient to show compliance. A BOM is required to be held as part of the technical documentation requirements of the toy safety directive, however due to the changes in the chemical requirements the BOM is now used to look at what toys are made of. This allows manufacturers to control the supply chain and raw materials to ensure that every single product that is made complies with the chemical safety requirements. The traditional model of showing buyers and retailers that a product complied was through testing the final product, however this would only tell them that the product that was tested actually complies - it does not tell them anything more than that. Toy manufacturers need to be able to demonstrate compliance in other ways.



Keith Richards, Technical Director - European Toys and Children's Products, UL

Should manufacturers, distributors and retailers communicate changes in safety to consumers?

Generally the consumer will assume the product is safe unless informed otherwise. Certainly when there are safety issues identified associate with a product these need to be communicated to the consumer. The information on safety should be available to the consumer so that

they can make informed decisions when they make purchases of products or even when new safety issues are identified.

Has the recently changed directive had a direct impact in the way companies are manufacturing and testing their products?

Certainly manufacturers are reviewing their systems and processes for demonstrating compliance. It has never been effective to try and test all materials used in toys for all restricted chemicals, so selective testing has always been performed. What has changed is the number of restricted chemicals and this has made manufacturers review their processes and systems to ensure that they have much better control over their raw materials and processes. Testing is an important part of any quality system related to manufacture, but it should be used to confirm that the systems are working and the company is in full control of their products or alternatively identify issues with their systems or production.

Can you explain what a Bill of Materials does and doesn't prove, and what the benefits are to having one?

A bill of material alone will not be sufficient to show that a product is safe. A BOM identifies the materials used in the manufacture and from that an assessment can be made as to which chemicals may be present. Where there is sufficient information to show that the material is 'safe' and compliant with the legal requirements then chemical analysis does not necessarily need to be performed.

Should the safety of a product be used more as a selling point of a toy?

Toys put onto the European market must be safe to comply with the Toys Directive. Unfortunately some products do slip through where there are safety issues identified after they have been distributed. It is important to manufactures to ensure that any toys they produce are safe so indeed some companies do use this aspect as part of their marketing.

What forthcoming changes in safety should people be aware of?

The legislation and requirements on chemical safety change frequently. This is because uses of chemicals change and more information on the toxicological aspects of chemicals becomes available. Work is constantly ongoing to review and address any potential safety aspects that are identified. The most recent change involved an update to the European Standard on acoustic requirements, to ensure that the child is not exposed to high levels of sound that may damage their hearing.

Rob Hinchcliffe, Intertek, UK Toys & Hardlines Business Line Manager



Should manufacturers, distributors and retailers communicate changes in safety to consumers?

If the nature of the changes affect their ability to safely use the product in question, require an alteration in operation to safely use or may impact the usefulness or ability of the product to perform in a way it did previously then this should be communicated. If the change has no direct effect on them or the product then this isn't always a necessity.

Has the the recently changed directive had a direct impact in the way companies are manufacturing and testing their products?

I believe it has brought an even sharper focus onto the materials and chemicals used in both the manufacturing

process and the products themselves. As such many companies are now heavily biased towards both chemical testing and chemical management within the supply chain recognising that this is not only a way to control ever increasing testing spend but also managing the probability of failures later in the production cycle.

Can you explain what a Bill of Materials does and doesn't prove, and what the benefits are to having one?

Some buyers and retailers are beginning to understand that non-testing methods of compliance can now be used and that a detailed BOM can go a long way towards assisting in this. Unfortunately, there is still a large percentage that feel testing is still the most reliable form of

demonstrating compliance. This situation has not been helped by a continued lack of detailed BOM availability and a reluctance by manufacturers and vendors to supply these in the necessary format required. If a BOM can be supplied that does indeed meet this level of detail, then it could form part of an overall assessment to deem the likelihood of heavy metals being present. This could form its own compliance depending upon the conclusions reached in the assessment. The other factor holding this back somewhat is still or own data and understanding of how and where many of these heavy metals can be found.

Should the safety of a product be used more as a selling point of a toy?

As consumers begin to understand the inherent dangers of all products and in particular toys, then safety and compliances should also

take on greater significance in the marketing and selling of them. An educated consumer base who understand the meaning of the CE mark and have a basic grasp of the principles of toy safety may become more discerning in their purchases as time goes on. Manufacturers and importers who also realise the importance of this could well be the ultimate winners.

What forthcoming changes in safety should people be aware of?

There are a number of smaller changes coming up in the next few years, but the major two pieces of legislation that could have a more significant impact would be the changes to EN71-1 on sound producing toys that come into force in September 2014 and also the new Consumer Product Safety Regulations that are likely to come into force in 2015.