

## A New Perspective on how to Solve the Toy Safety Dilemma

Keeping our children from playing with toys that contain toxic elements is imperative. There are simple measures that can easily be applied across the spectrum of consumer products including ways manufacturing companies make toys and how toy distributors and companies pay the manufacturers.

Let's solve this problem by having the manufacturers test the raw materials. By testing the raw materials that are used in the production of these products, specifically plastics, we could eliminate harmful elements from being used in dangerous quantities. Manufacturers should also use a batch number associated with the production run; this could help with any recalls down the line and reduce expenses to importers, retailers and manufactures.

If testing raw materials isn't possible by the manufacturers, then the importers and retailers need to address the issue of ensuring safe quality products. Importers and retailers, such as Wal-Mart, Target, Toys-R-Us, etc., hire a manufacturing plant overseas, and hope that they will provide safe quality products at inexpensive rates, yet there is very limited regulation on what goes into these products. What the importing companies (Wal-Mart, Target, etc.) do when they place an order with the manufacturer in a foreign country is to put the contract money in an escrow account and when the container ship arrives at the port of call in the United States, the money that was placed in the escrow account is transferred to the manufacturer, thus completing the transaction.

At that point, the products need to be tested. By delaying the transfer of escrow money to the manufacturer until the products are tested and certified free from toxic elements will help solve the toy safety dilemma. Any product that is determined to contain a harmful toxic element, such as lead or cadmium, should be sent back to the manufacturer on their dime. It's as simple as that.

This will create an incentive for the manufacturer to provide a safe quality product. Manufacturers would be testing their products prior to shipment, either in the raw materials stage, or at the finished product stage, if not at both times. And the importer or customs would be inspecting the product as it arrives in the United States or at the importers distribution warehouse. The manufacturer does not want to pay for merchandise they sent halfway around the world, to be sent back to them. This gives a greater level of quality assurance for the American, if not, worldwide consumer and prevents potentially harmful products from reaching the shelves and entering the consumer's home.

With some common sense and a little bit of honest, hard-work, both large and small manufacturers, importers and retailers can help protect consumers. All it takes is a new perspective on the way business is done. These changes can make a difference, help keep people and children safer and reduce potential expenses for the importers, retailers, manufactures and consumers.

Written by Seth Goldberg, President of Essco Safety Check.

*Seth Goldberg is owner and President of Essco (Environmental Services & Solutions Corporation) Safety Check, a mobile consumer product testing company based in Bellevue, WA. Our technicians are all certified HUD lead inspectors; we perform in-home and business inspections using XRF (X-Ray Fluorescence) analyzers to detect the presence of a variety of toxic elements. Essco Safety Check is working with the advisory committee for the Children's Safe Products Act of Washington State. We are working with several autism groups, as well as working on leeching studies of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) toys. We have assisted the CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) with data from our tests which has resulted in a nationwide recall on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, and the CPSC is further investigating the data that Essco provided. Our goal is to educate people and businesses about the toxic elements in consumer products and how to reduce exposure.*