



Consumer Federation of America



August 2, 2007

Dear Senator:

Yesterday, the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission and Fisher-Price announced the recall of almost 1 million children's toys imported from China because they pose a serious lead poison hazard. This product safety recall comes on the heels of several other recent cases involving unsafe products and contaminated foods from China. Clearly, the system of effectively protecting consumers from dangerous and toxic foods and products is broken. We urge you to take prompt action to address this alarming problem.

This most recent recall involves some of the most popular children's toys, including Big Bird, Elmo, and Dora the Explorer. The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission and Fisher-Price are recalling these products because they could be coated with lead paint. Lead is toxic if ingested, and can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and, at very high levels, seizures, coma, and even death. Children are particularly vulnerable.

Other recent recalls are equally alarming, and have involved pet food contaminated with melamine, toothpaste containing diethylene glycol, Thomas the Tank Engine toys coated with lead paint, and unsafe tires. Last year 467 products were recalled in the U.S.—a record-high level. The number of Chinese-made consumer-products recalled has doubled in the last five years and accounts for 60 percent of all product recalls and 100 percent of the 24 kinds of toys recalled this year.

We ask that you act quickly to provide more resources and tools to the federal agencies charged with policing the safety of the nation's product and food supply. In addition, we must put mechanisms in place to hold companies accountable for the products they import and sell in the United States including requiring independent third party testing and certification of consumer products.

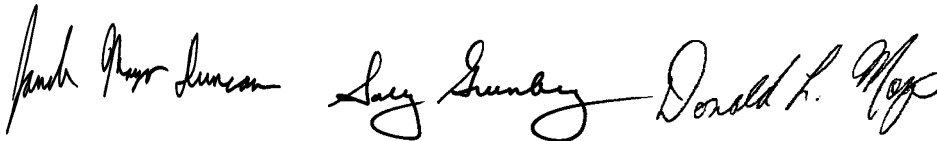
Consumers Union, joined by Consumer Federation of America, recently issued an eight-step plan of action of legislative improvements to help protect consumers from hazardous imports, including:

- (1) Providing increased resources to government safety agencies to prevent unsafe products from crossing our borders;
- (2) Holding old suppliers, importers, distributors, and manufacturers accountable for bringing unsafe products to the market by requiring pre-shipment inspections and testing to ensure product safety;

- (3) Developing U.S. government-administered, third-party safety certification programs for all products;
- (4) Developing a product traceability program for both country-of-origin labeling for food and consumer products as well as for all components and ingredients;
- (5) Requiring that importers post a bond to ensure they have sufficient resources to recall their products should they prove dangerous or defective;
- (6) Giving all agencies with enforcement authority the power to levy meaningful civil penalties for manufacturers, importers, distributors, and retailers who fail to comply with regulations, and criminal penalties for those who knowingly and repeatedly jeopardize public safety;
- (7) Authorizing mandatory recall authority for all government agencies; and
- (8) Requiring all government agencies to publicly disclose information pertaining to safety investigations and reports of adverse events.

Clearly, we need greater vigilance and enforcement to make sure the food and toys produced in foreign factories meet our safety standards. Recalling unsafe products is a poor strategy for ensuring a safe marketplace. We look forward to working with you to better ensure safer foods and products. Consumers deserve no less.

Sincerely,



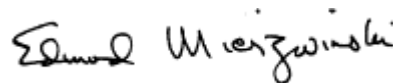
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