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Contact: Steve Cleary - 907-278-3661 - AkPIRG

CONSUMER GROUP ALERTS SHOPPERS TO HIDDEN TOY HAZARDS

AkPIRG Petitions Federal Trade Commission to Investigate
Toys Falsely Labeled "Phthalate Free"

Hazardous toys continue to be sold in stores across the country, according to the 20th annual toy safety survey released today by the Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG).

"While we can report substantial progress after 20 years of advocacy on behalf of America's littlest consumers, we are still finding trouble in toyland," said AkPIRG's Steve Cleary.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), three-fourths of the 210,000 people who sought treatment in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries in 2004 were younger than 15. Sixteen children died from toy related injuries last year.

"Even one toy-related death is too many, because these deaths are preventable," continued Cleary.

The 20th annual Trouble in Toyland report, available at www.toysafety.net, offers safety guidelines for purchasing toys for small children and provides examples of toys currently on store shelves that pose potential safety hazards. AkPIRG's research focused on four categories of toy dangers: Toxic Chemicals, Choking Hazards, Dangerously Loud Toys and Strangulation Hazards.

Chemical Concerns:

Phthalates, a class of chemicals used to soften plastic toys and teething rings, have been linked to a range of health effects, including reproductive defects and early onset puberty. Some manufacturers have started labeling their products as "phthalate-free." USPIRG commissioned an independent laboratory to test eight children's toys and childcare articles—all labeled "phthalate-free." Six of these eight products tested positive for phthalates.

AkPIRG submitted a letter to the Federal Trade Commission and the CPSC, asking them to investigate the validity of "phthalate-free" labels. AkPIRG also renewed its call for the CPSC to follow the European Union's lead and ban phthalates in all products intended for children under age five.

The full report is available at www.toysafety.net. The short brochure "Tips for Toy Safety" also is available for download in both English and Spanish.