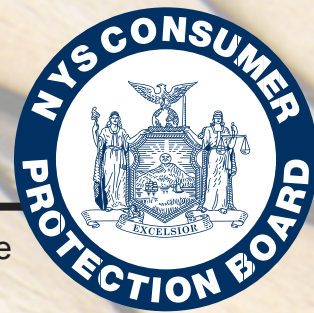


Back to School Shopping Safety



As the summer break begins to wind down, parents and others are gearing up for the back-to-school shopping season. The New York State Consumer Protection Board (CPB) wants parents and care givers to be vigilant when acquiring children's school supplies and doing back-to-school clothes shopping. By being an alert and informed consumer, parents and caregivers can help keep their children safe at home and at school. Here are a few things to look for as you prepare for the upcoming school year.

Art Supplies

To help parents, teachers and caregivers choose safe and non toxic back-to-school art supplies including, markers, crayons, modeling clay, and paint sets for their children, the CPB urges consumers to read and heed product labels. Nontoxic products should be used in the manner in which they are intended. When these products are used in an unintended way, these materials can have harmful effects.

What You Should Know:

Federal law mandates that all art supplies containing hazardous substances be marked with warning labels detailing the hazards. For example, if a specific color of paint includes a metallic pigment, it must carry a warning that the product contains a hazardous substance.

Art supplies that are marketed or sold to children must be marked with the statement: "CONFORMS TO ASTM D-4236". This statement can only be made in relation to items that have been properly reviewed by toxicologists and deemed safe. The CPB urges all parents, teachers and caregivers to look for this statement of certification on all art supplies that are to be used by children.

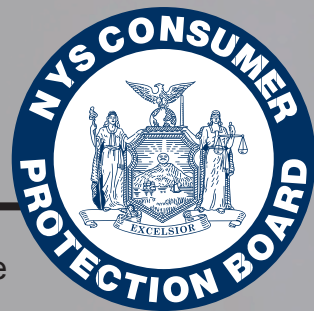
Tips To Follow:

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the CPB have outlined some tips for the safe use of art supplies by children:

- Avoid art supplies with warning labels.
- Avoid old or unlabeled supplies. Be wary of donated supplies that have warning labels or are not marked with "CONFORMS TO ASTM D-4236" on the packaging.
- Avoid solvents and solvent based inks, pens, and permanent markers.
- Avoid dry erase and permanent markers with heavy odors. Children are more susceptible to the effects of the heavy odors in standard versions of these products.
- Avoid acids, alkalis, bleaches, or corrosive chemicals. Products containing any of these chemicals will require warning labels on the packaging.
- Avoid products that are in powder form and need to be mixed, which may allow airborne particles to be inhaled. If powders are used, mix them in a well ventilated area before giving the item to children.
- Use water soluble paints, markers and inks as an alternative to solvent based supplies. Water soluble paints don't require toxic solvents for cleanup, and water soluble markers and inks can be washed from fabrics more easily than solvent based versions.
- Look for "low odor" dry erase markers, which have been developed specifically for children's use, and should be substituted for standard markers.
- Supervise children to ensure that they are using the art supply as it was intended.
- Give special attention to students with higher exposure risks, such as:
 - Children with physical or mental challenges; Children with visual or hearing difficulties which may hinder the recognition of spills or skin exposures and may require the student to get close to supplies during use which can increase their inhalation of fumes or dusts; and,
 - Children who suffer from asthma or allergies, which may elevate the child's sensitivities to fumes, dusts, or products that come in contact with the skin.
- Have children clean up after using any art supply.

See CPSC publication 5015, "Art and Craft Safety Guide", which is available online at the following link: www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/5015.pdf for further information.

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Drawstrings In Clothing

The use of drawstrings in children's garments is regulated in the State of New York as drawstrings at the neck or waist of a clothing item pose safety hazards. Drawstrings can become entangled with playground equipment, cribs, car and bus doors, and with many other common items causing injury and even death.

What You Should Know:

There have been numerous recent recalls of children's garments with drawstrings. This increased awareness stems in part from the 2008 strangulation death of a three- year old child whose hooded sweatshirt was caught on a piece of playground equipment. Before purchasing clothing with drawstrings, check out the posted recalls on the New York State Consumer Protection Board (CPB) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) web sites at www.nysconsumer.gov, and www.recalls.gov. Additionally, become familiar with New York State Law as information will help protect your children.

Tips To Follow:

The General Business Law in New York State mandates the following:

Drawstrings at the neck:

It is illegal to sell any children's garment (up to size 12) with a drawstring at the neck. If parents or caretakers have garments for their children with drawstrings at the neck, the CPB recommends either removing the drawstring immediately to eliminate the safety threat, or returning the item to the place of purchase for a replacement or refund.

Drawstrings at the waist:

Drawstrings at the waist of children's garments, (size two-T to size 16), such as in the waist of sweatpants, or at the bottom of a jacket, are allowed with some limitations. The law states:

- The drawstring must be attached to the garment at the center point of the drawstring channel (at the rear of the garment). This can be tested by pulling one side of the drawstring. If the drawstring can move freely from side to side, it is not compliant.
- The drawstring cannot extend any more than three (3) inches from the point where the drawstring exits the garment. To test the length, a credit card can be used as a ruler. The longer side of standard credit card is slightly longer than three (3) inches. Any drawstring that is shorter than the long side of a credit card when fully extended from the drawstring exit or hole should be compliant. Any drawstring that is longer than the long side of a credit card when measured from the drawstring exit or hole is illegal under New York State law.
- No knots, toggles, attachments, or embellishments should be on the ends of the drawstring. The only item that is allowed on the ends is a tube-like aglet used to prevent fraying, similar to the aglet found on the ends of shoelaces. The CPB encourages consumers to not place knots or other embellishments on the ends of a drawstring after an item is purchased.

If a consumer has garments with drawstrings at the waist that do not conform to these guidelines, the CPB recommends either removing the drawstring immediately to eliminate the safety threat, or returning the item to the place of purchase for a replacement or refund.

Visit the CPB on the web at www.nysconsumer.gov for the latest consumer product information.