

Fisher-Price fined \$975,000 for failing to report a serious choking

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced today that Fisher-Price Inc., of East Aurora, N.Y., has agreed to pay a \$975,000 civil penalty. The penalty, which the Commission has provisionally accepted, settles allegations that the company failed to report to the government that a nail fastener in the Little People Animal Sounds Farm could separate from the toy and pose a serious choking or aspiration hazard to young children.

About 67,000 Little People Animal Sounds Farms were sold nationwide by Fisher-Price from June 2002 through July 2002. In September 2002, the company received its first report of a nail fastener coming loose from one of the toy barn's stall doors. Over the next two months, Fisher-Price received nine additional reports, including one case of a child placing the nail fastener in her mouth.

By February 2003, Fisher-Price had received two reports of parents concerned that this problem posed a choking hazard to children and a report of a December 30, 2002 incident in which a 14-month old child aspirated a nail fastener into his lung. The child was taken to the hospital and underwent an emergency surgical procedure to have the metal nail fastener removed.

It was not until March 2003 that the company reported the safety hazard with the Little People Animal Farm to the Commission. By that time, Fisher-Price was aware of at least 33 reports in which the nail fastener came loose from the stall doors. These included four reports of children who put the metal nail fastener in their mouths and the one case of the child who aspirated the nail fastener.

Federal law requires firms to report to CPSC immediately (within 24 hours) after obtaining information reasonably supporting the conclusion that a product contains a defect which could create a substantial risk of injury to the public, presents an unreasonable risk of serious injury or death, or violates a federal safety standard.

In April 2003, CPSC and Fisher-Price announced the recall of the Little People Animal Sounds Farms and recommended that consumers take the toy away from young children immediately and contact the company to receive a free repair kit. Consumer can still call Fisher-Price anytime at (866) 259-7873 or order the repair kit online at <http://www.service.mattel.com/>.

In agreeing to settle the matter, Fisher-Price Inc. denies CPSC's allegations that the company knowingly violated the law.

Prior to the loss of quorum, the Commission delegated authority to the Office of Compliance and Field

Operations to settle this matter with Fisher- Price before March 1, 2007.

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