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Ask the Experts: New Drop-Side Crib Standards

Our Contributors

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New regulations for crib manufacturers have been announced. We asked members of industry organizations closely connected to juvenile product safety to help explain what this means to you as consumers.

What are the new crib standards/regulations?

TIM: There are actually two sets of rules with which crib manufacturers should comply in regard to safety:

- **Voluntary safety standards**—Often written primarily by members of standards organizations, such as ASTM International which is comprised of manufacturers, non-government groups, consumer advocates and test labs.
- **Mandatory regulations**—Written by divisions in the government, such as the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or Health Canada, and apply to all products that the regulations cover.

MICHAEL: *Voluntary safety standards*—especially those set by ASTM—are suggested standards that many manufacturers choose to meet, although they are not required by law to do so. *Mandatory regulations* are enforced by government law.

Why have these new standards/regulations been introduced?

TIM: The *voluntary crib standards* were developed in response to the increasing number of safety-related incidents, many of which led to the recall of millions of cribs over the last several years.

The CPSC, consumer advocacy groups and ASTM International worked with test labs to develop more stringent test methods. The end result was a completely revamped set of *mandatory standards* that features a timetable for a complete ban of full-size drop-side cribs.

How are the new standards/regulations different from previous rules?

TIM: The current *voluntary standards* for cribs feature several improvements over previous standards, including:

- A more rigorous mattress support test
- An intensive spindle/slat strength requirement
- An all-new crib shaking test
- A ban on wood screws in components
- Design requirements to limit improper assembly of components
- Continued effective ban of full-size drop-side cribs

MICHAEL: The *federal (mandatory) regulations* are substantially the same as the ASTM (voluntary) standards, except for some technical differences having to do with testing protocols.

When do they take effect?

TIM: The *new federal (mandatory) regulations* were published and made law on December 28, 2010. They will become effective 6 months later, so all cribs sold after June 28, 2011 must comply with the new federal regulations.

Voluntary standards have no “effective date,” as they are optional and not required by federal regulation.

MICHAEL: Still, many manufacturers were testing and certifying via the JPMA Certification program to meet the new voluntary standard long before the new mandatory regulations were announced.

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How does this change affect consumers who already have cribs that have not been recalled but do not meet these new standards?

TIM: The *new federal (mandatory) regulations* only affect cribs that are offered for sale after the effective date. Cribs that are already in consumers' homes are not affected by the new regulations. However, most manufacturers have already been subjecting their cribs to more stringent testing in advance to ensure that they are in compliance.

MICHAEL: The new regulations also apply to cribs found in commercial establishments, such as day care centers and hotels, which will be required to replace all cribs that don't meet the requirements within two years of the effective date.

Will all cribs not meeting these new standards/regulations now be recalled?

TIM: The simple answer is no. Only products that are offered for sale after the effective date of the regulations that do not meet the requirements will be subject to an automatic recall.

Will these standards/regulations make some cribs obsolete?

TIM: Yes, the *new federal (mandatory) regulations* will make some cribs obsolete. The intent is to require manufacturers to better design cribs and increase the quality of cribs sold to consumers.

Should parents replace a crib that is already in their possession?

TIM: Cribs are all intended to be safe. These regulations increase the quality and safety of new cribs to reduce the risk of any incidents occurring; however, replacing your older crib with a newer one is not required by law.

MICHAEL: Keep in mind that the purchase and use of second-hand products that have been passed down or purchased from a thrift store or garage sale can be cause for concern, because, in these instances, hardware and/or assembly instructions could be missing or the product could have been previously recalled without the parents' knowledge.

How will consumers be able to tell if the cribs being sold in their local stores meet the new standards/regulations?

MICHAEL: Other than in Illinois, retailers are not required to remove product from their inventory that does not meet the *current voluntary standard*. Compliance to this standard is based upon the date of manufacture, so a manufacturer can certify to the version of the standard that was in place at the time the product was made.

However, as mentioned above, once the *new federal/mandatory regulations* are in effect on June 28, 2011, retailers cannot sell products that are not in compliance with the new law.

TIM: All cribs offered for sale after the effective date are required to comply with the newest federal regulations. If consumers want to be absolutely certain that the cribs offered for sale meet these regulations, they should call the manufacturers' customer service lines directly and inquire about specific models.

What is being done to get this information out to the public?

TIM: The CPSC has worked with several other groups to launch the "Safe Sleep Initiative," a national education campaign promoting crib safety to new and expectant parents. Working with a variety of medical and consumer advocacy groups, this educational effort strives to educate parents and caregivers about how to avoid entrapment, strangulation and suffocation risks in a child's sleeping environment.

MICHAEL: JPMA launched a safe sleep initiative in early 2010 called "Make Every Night a Good, Safe Night" which includes helpful information promoting safe sleep practices to all parents and caregivers. Visit CribSafety.org for more information.

CPSC Regulations Report (December 28, 2010)

[Final Rule: Safety Standards for Full-Size and Non-Full-Size Baby Cribs](#)

Other resources

<http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerell/prhtml1111021.html>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerell/prhtml08/08203.html>

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