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Feature



Child Safety

A Top Priority for ASTM
[Committee F15](#)

by **Bob Waller**

The wonder and amazement of a first baby brings much to the imagination of new parents. Upon hearing of a new life, the search for a crib, high chair, stroller and much more begins. Many new

parents have no idea stringent standards are developed for children's products. The question is, what are these standards and how do they come about?

More than 20 years ago, the juvenile products industry saw the advantage of utilizing the ASTM process to develop consensus standards for children's products. Currently there are 17 standards covering the following products:

1. Bath seats;
2. Carriages and strollers;
3. Full size cribs;
4. Non-full size cribs;
5. Gates and enclosures;
6. High chairs;
7. Portable hook-on chairs;
8. Play yards;
9. Stationary activity centers;
10. Infant swings;
11. Toddler beds;
12. Baby walkers;
13. Bassinets/cradles;
14. Infant bouncer seats;
15. Infant bedding;
16. Portable bed rails; and
17. Hand held infant carriers.

In addition, there are standards in development for front and back baby carriers and changing tables. These standards



Bob Waller serves as president of the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association. In his position, Waller is responsible for oversight of the association's certification program and day-to-day operations including interaction with committee members, legal counsel and government agencies. He oversees the annual International JPMA Show.

Does This Meet ASTM Standards?

So, how do consumers know a juvenile product manufacturer has taken the additional step to ensure their products meet the applicable current ASTM standard? They look for the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association certification seal.

JPMA developed a product certification program using ASTM standards as the basis for each product category within the program. This program has been in existence

incorporate and often expand upon existing mandatory government standards.

Mandatory and Voluntary Standards

When thinking about all products intended for children, where to begin when developing a standard can be overwhelming. Clearly the industry wants to ensure all products marketed to consumers are of the highest quality and meet all mandatory and voluntary standards. The ASTM standards are developed for juvenile products based on hazard data, which provides each of the subcommittees insight into how the products are used by consumers and, in some cases, misused.

Some products even have comprehensive federal mandatory standards that all manufacturers of those specific products must meet in order for the products to be sold. For example, all children's car seats must meet the federal standard FMVSS 213, administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration prior to being sold. This standard requires comprehensive dynamic testing intended to simulate crash situations and ensure the reasonable safety of the child occupant. Other mandatory standards are generic, covering all products intended for use by children. For example, small parts that may be a hazard to children under three years of age are regulated (Section 16 Code of Federal Regulations 1501, et seq.) by the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission which administers regulations under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act and the Consumer Product Safety Act. The CPSC also administers regulations that restrict the level of lead in paint and other similar surface coatings (16 C.F.R. 1303). The CPSC incorporates simulated use and abuse performance tests in their regulations. Finally, they administer mandatory regulations for certain aspects of full-size baby cribs (16 C.F.R. 1508), non-full-size baby cribs (16 C.F.R. 1509), rattles (16 C.F.R. 1510), pacifiers (16 C.F.R. 1511), or banning certain types of baby bouncers, baby walkers and infant cushions (16 C.F.R. 1500.18).

What Is Hazard Data?

The juvenile products industry has a long and successful relationship with the CPSC, the federal agency responsible for all consumer products. The CPSC is an active participant in the development of standards covering children's products.

Through complaints and the CPSC's National Emergency Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), data is provided to each of the relevant ASTM subcommittees on patterns of injuries involving specific products. These patterns of injuries assist the subcommittees in determining what direction to take in the development of a new standard, or a revision to a current standard.

As an example, until recently, the standard for baby walkers included specific test requirements for tipping, dynamic and static load testing and occupant retention. The data provided by the CPSC from the NEISS system indicated there was a pattern of injuries surrounding children falling down stairs in their walkers.

since the mid 1970s and continues to grow as more ASTM standards for juvenile products are published.

The purpose of the certification program is to assure the consumer that distributors bearing the seal have demonstrated compliance with the requirements of the appropriate ASTM standard through independent laboratory reviews.

As sponsor and administrator of the program, JPMA retains the independent testing lab of Intertek Testing Services to perform the tests or witness the testing of sample units on a periodic basis. Samples of each product are tested for compliance with all sections of each standard, or the lab verifies procedures used to help insure compliance. Does this mean that the lab tests every product? Of course not. However, to add "teeth" to the program, products bearing the certification seal are purchased in retail stores, and Intertek conducts occasional random testing to ensure the products offered for sale are in compliance with the appropriate standard. The program is voluntary and participating manufacturers must certify that all models produced or directly marketed for sale in the United States are in compliance.

Although this program does not guarantee each and every product is safe, it does indicate that the manufacturer took the extra step to ensure the product complies with the requirements

The subcommittee used the data to develop specific performance requirements to prevent walkers from falling down stairs. The revision to ASTM [F 977](#), Consumer Safety Specification for Infant Walkers, resulted in the reduction of hundreds of injuries to children who may not have been adequately supervised.

of the ASTM standard. To request a copy of the JPMA certification program directory, please visit the [JPMA Web site](#).

The ASTM Process at Work

Participants in the development of standards for juvenile products within ASTM Committee F15 include representatives from the federal government, including the CPSC and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, along with manufacturers, retailers, test labs, consumer advocate groups and individual consumers. Each standard's requirements are specific to the individual product. The testing requirements reflect "real world" injuries and are intended to address typical use as well as reasonably foreseeable abuse of the product(s).

The following are some requirements incorporated into ASTM standards for a few of the products that go beyond mandatory federal requirements:

- High Chairs
 - Drop test for trays
 - Disengagement test of trays
 - Load and stability tests for chairs
 - Restraining system tests
- Cribs
 - Corner post vertical extensions
 - Dynamic impact testing for crib structural integrity
 - Crib interior dimensions and component spacing
 - Impact testing of crib side rails
- Carriages and Strollers
 - Brake requirements
 - Load tests on the seat and footrests
 - Stability tests
 - Restraint system integrity

In addition, each of the standards contain specific requirements for labeling and marking of both the product and packaging. These warnings/markings are intended to alert parents/caregivers to specific issues involving each product.

Conclusion

Manufacturers of products intended for children understand they must assume additional responsibility to ensure the safety of the user. By ensuring compliance to the applicable ASTM standard and use of the JPMA certification program (see sidebar) consumers can feel secure the product is built with safety in mind. //

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