

CONTENT EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 ON TUESDAY 13TH OCTOBER

Don't Toy With Children's Safety: more than half of the toys tested from online marketplaces could cause serious injury or death to children, warns the British Toy and Hobby Association in alarming new report for MPs



Despite repeated warnings from the British Toy and Hobby Association, unsafe toys, which could cause serious harm to children, are still being sold via third-party sellers on online marketplaces. With the Christmas shopping season fast approaching and the full response to the Online Harms legislation expected this autumn, the BTHA is calling on government to take action now before a child dies.

The findings from the BTHA's new *Don't Toy With Children's Safety* Report are alarming: 60% of toys tested had serious safety failures and 86% were illegal to sell in the UK.

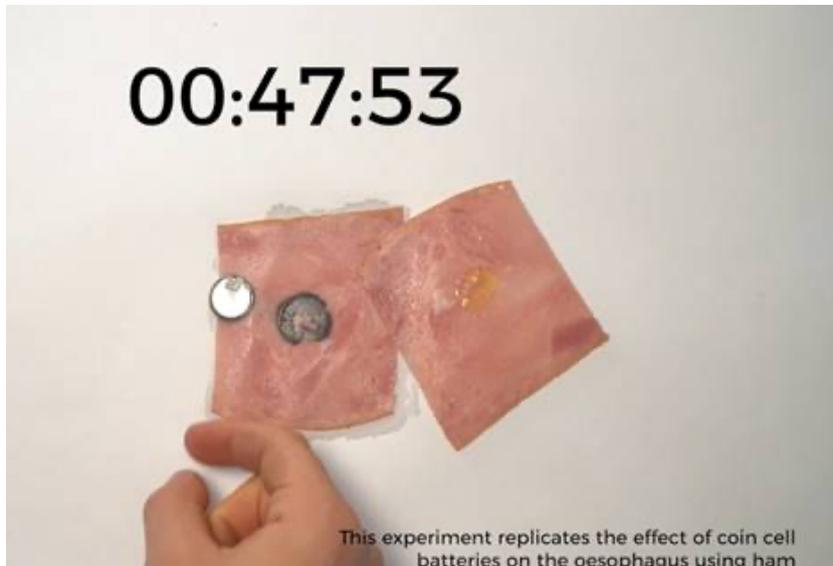
The temporary closure of brick-and-mortar businesses during the pandemic meant many families relied on ecommerce deliveries, including many marketplace sales. The BTHA is concerned more unsafe toys than ever may be finding their way into parent's homes and wish to raise awareness as people start to think about Christmas shopping. Now the BTHA is also taking its campaign directly to MPs in a virtual round table event diarised for Tuesday 13th October to call for urgent government action to change the law.

Parliamentarians will be presented with the BTHA's findings and afforded the opportunity to learn more about the situation so that critical changes to the law can be effectuated. The BTHA's local MP, Neil Coyle (Member of Parliament for Bermondsey and Old Southwark), is sponsoring the event and is also a spokesperson for the report.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT:

- 86% of randomly selected toys tested failed to comply with UK toy safety laws and 60% had faults that made them unsafe to play with (compared to last year's report, in which 58% of toys were found to be illegal to sell in the UK and 22% were deemed unsafe). The situation is getting worse.
- With many international sellers falling outside the jurisdiction of UK enforcement authorities, it is difficult to trace those responsible and hold them accountable.

- Even when products are reported and delisted by the platforms, seemingly identical products continue to be sold – trying to remove unsafe products is “like playing wack-a-mole”
- There are no defined legal requirements for online marketplaces to check the safety of the products that are sold via their platform.



Natasha Crookes, Director of Public Affairs for the BTHA, says: *“Little or no action has been taken to make sustained changes that will protect children from unsafe toys. Faults we have identified include access to small batteries that burn the oesophagus if swallowed, use of restricted chemicals, small parts which are a choke risk, the use of long chords with their increased risk of strangulation and magnets which are*

extremely harmful if ingested.

Jerry Burnie, Head of Technical Compliance for the BTHA, continues: *“We are calling on government to take action to protect children before another child is seriously injured, or even dies. In the meantime, consumers should exercise caution when buying toys from third-party sellers on online marketplaces such as Amazon, Alibaba’s AliExpress and eBay and should follow the BTHA consumer tips to reduce the chances of buying dangerous toys.”*

The BTHA and its members are committed to making legally compliant, safe toys for children. Today they are calling for:

- Changes to UK legislation to make online marketplaces jointly liable for third-party sales - that means if you buy a toy via a platform, no matter who the seller is, the marketplace has joint responsibility for ensuring it is safe before allowing it to be sold via its site.
- Updates to consumer laws to govern the terms and conditions of online marketplaces, including a warranty as to the quality and fitness for purpose of the products you buy.
- Online marketplaces to be held responsible for enforcement of safety regulations by the sellers on the site – make them police the safety of the products they give a shop window to.
- Trading Standards and the Office for Product Safety and Standards must have the power to take action against marketplace platforms and remove unsafe products from these platforms.
- The Online Harms bill to include physical harm from defective products sold via online market platforms.

Online marketplaces have brought greater convenience and choice to consumers. This cannot, however, be at the detriment of safety, and UK laws need to be adapted to better regulate online marketplaces and safeguard our children.

ENDS

For more information, and access to the below assets, please contact Andrew Michael <andrewM@thephagroup.com>

SPOKESPEOPLE

FULL REPORT

MAIN VIDEO

B-ROLL

SOCIAL MEDIA CLIPS

IMAGES AND ACCREDITATIONS FOR MEDIA USE

NB: The full report can be downloaded from the BTHA website from 13th October