Legal requirements for internal window blinds

Surveyor and installer guide for made-to-measure blinds
“My daughter, Megan, became entangled in a window blind chain in her bedroom when she was two and a half years old. She spent four days in hospital on a life support machine before we knew she was going to recover. Something as simple as an unrestrained window blind cord or chain can present a real danger to young children but with awareness and by taking some simple actions, any hazard can be eliminated. **Make sure you always Make it Safe**.”

“The General Product Safety Regulations, 2005 place an obligation on all businesses to supply and professionally install safe products. The revision to BS EN 13120:2009+A1:2014 defines a safe product within these Regulations.

**Which products?**
All internal blinds with cords or chains which could create a hazard.

**Where?**
- All homes
- All public buildings
- Areas of commercial buildings where children aged between 0-42 months are likely to have access or be present

**What?**
- Limitations on cord and chain lengths
- The installation of safety devices on cords or chains
- Testing of safety devices
- Product warning notices
- Product instructions

It’s the Law!

**“Make it Safe”**
says Mum of three, Rachael Maynard
Introduction

The 2014 changes to the child safety requirements of BS EN 13120:2009+A1:2014 place an obligation on all in the industry to sell and install compliant products.

The requirements affect all homes and all public buildings and possibly some areas of commercial buildings.

Surveyors
- Sell inherently child safe products first - often called Safe by Design - especially if access to the cords is difficult, for example: obstructions or if the client has a disability
- If you have to use a blind that requires safety devices - either integral (built in) or non-integral (require separate fitting) you must advise the customer and agree how and where such devices will be used/fitted

Installers
You must install the blinds as required by the standard.
- Any supplementary safety devices must be securely fitted
- All warnings should be left on the product
- Product instructions must be left with the customer
- The customer should be shown how the blind and safety device(s) work
Maximum cord and chain lengths where fitting height is known

Accumulation device must be installed a minimum of 1.5m from the floor and as near to the headrail as possible.

The average height of a UK male is 175cm
The average height of a UK female is 162cm

Blinds with pull cords

**accumulation devices**

Examples - Blinds with/without cord locks such as venetian, roman and pleated

- Name or trademark on the blind
- General warning notice left on the blind
- Product instructions left with the customer
- Accumulation device securely fitted at least 1.5m from floor and as near to the headrail as possible
- Non-tangle tassels. An accumulation device also required if cords at lowest point (fully tilted) extend below 1.5m from the floor
- Cord stops to be fitted as close to the headrail as possible and not more than 50mm away, with the blind being in the fully extended position
- If more than two pull cords (and less than 5) a breakaway system is needed (this may also operate as a cord stop - see 6 above).

NB - A blind with pull cords must not be fitted less than 1.5m from the floor

Blinds with looped cords/chains

**tensioning devices**

Examples - Blinds with side chain/cord operation such as rollers, verticals, romans and venetians

- Name or trademark on the blind
- General warning notice left on the blind
- Product instructions left with the customer
- Tensioning device securely fitted at the maximum distance from the headrail and at least 1.5m from the floor

NB - Stabilising chains on vertical blinds are not covered by the standard

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**WARNING**

Young children can be strangled by loops in pull cords, chains, tapes and inner cords that operate the product.

To avoid strangulation and entanglement, keep cords out of the reach of young children. Cords may become wrapped around a child’s neck.

Move beds, cots and furniture away from window covering cords.

Do not tie cords together. Make sure cords do not twist and create a loop.
Blinds with breakaway devices

Examples - Blinds with side chain/cord operation where the full length of the cord or chain does not go through the mechanism to fully raise/lower the blind

1. Name or trademark on the blind
2. General warning notice left on the blind
3. Product instructions left with the customer
4. Breakaway connector(s) installed and cord/chain at least 0.6m from the floor

NB - The number of breakaway connectors is not specified in the standard. The breakaway must work in all positions. Check with your supplier how many are required.

Roman blind lift cords

If the maximum distance between two consecutive attachment/retention points of inner cords is less than or equal to 200mm and it is not possible to insert the head probe then you should not need a breakaway system.

<= 200mm

If the blind does not meet these criteria a compliant safety system must be used on the lift/rear cords.

Operating cords and chains

The requirements for operating cords and chains will be dependent on the safety device(s) used - see pages 8 to 10.
Warning notices

General warning notice

Wording and size of text is determined by the standard

Non-integral warning notice

Children can strangle if this safety device is not installed. Always use this device to keep cords or chains out of reach of children.

Wording and size of text is determined by the standard

Warning notice (label) on packaging directed to the consumer

Wording is determined by the standard

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