

New Standards for Internal Window Blinds

Introduction

According to RoSPA since 1999 there have been 28 fatalities where babies and young children have become accidentally entangled with internal window blind cords and chains. 15 of these fatalities have occurred since 2010.

As far as the British Blind & Shutter Association (BBSA) are able to ascertain all of these tragic fatalities have occurred in the home and typically have involved children around 22 months of age.

The BBSA launched a campaign called Make it Safe in 2009 to help educate the trade and consumers in the safe installation and use of internal window blinds and have campaigned for revisions to product standards.

What?

Internal window blinds with cords and chains

Where?

All homes

All public buildings

Some commercial buildings

When?

Now

Standards and Regulation

On 27 July 2011 the EU issued a Decision (2011/477/EU) entitled:

“Commission Decision on the safety requirements to be met by European standards to address certain risks posed to children by internal blinds, corded window coverings and safety devices pursuant to Directive 2001/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council.”

On 28 February 2014 BSI published these in the UK:

BS EN 13120:2009+A1:2014 – Internal blinds – Performance requirements including safety

BS EN 16433:2014 – Internal blinds – Protection from strangulation hazards – Test methods

BS EN 16434:2014 – Internal blinds – Protection from strangulation hazards – Requirements and Test methods for safety devices

Compliance = Presumption of conformity with General Products Safety Regulations 2005
Professionally installed products would also be subject to the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work Act

Requirements of the standards

The child safety requirements of these standards run to some 40 pages but in summary the 2014 standards require:

- Safety devices for preventing any cords or chains from creating a hazardous loop
- The testing of all safety critical systems of internal blinds
- The testing of blinds using safety systems
- The fitting of safety devices on cords or chains at the point of manufacture
- Limitation on cord or chain lengths
- Warnings and instructions
- Packaging and point-of-sale

Where an additional safety device is required to make the blind safe this must be installed

Which premises are affected?

The EU Decision and standards deal with internal blinds with cords and chains that could create a hazardous loop "intended to be installed in premises where children 0-42 months are likely to have access or to be present."

What to look for in new window blinds

When considering new window blinds in homes or public buildings the BBSA strongly recommends that you choose a window blind

There are child safe alternatives of every blind style available now

Where?

"...all reasonably foreseeable environments where young children have access to or are likely to be present, such as, for example, homes, hotels, hospitals, churches, shops, schools, nurseries, and public places in general. Blinds and window coverings to be fitted in offices or any other place, which is transformed from its initial destination and where young children are likely to be present, shall also be subject to the present requirements."

EU Decision (2011/477/EU)

that is safe by design meaning that it does not use cords or chains to operate it or it uses concealed or tensioned cords and chains.

How to make existing window blinds safer

Existing blinds that are installed are not covered by the new standards but the BBSA strongly urges those responsible for or using blinds in all homes and public buildings to consider making existing blinds safer by using retrofit safety devices.

At the very least cords and chains should be kept out of reach of babies and small children.

Retrofit safety devices should be compliant with BS EN 16434:2014.

Curtain Tracks

The EU Decision also contains requirements for curtain tracks. "Although at the time this standard has been published no standard exists for draperies, test methods specified in the present standard may be used for such products." BS EN 16434:2014

Where to get more information

Contact a BBSA member or Make it Safe Dealer* who will be able to help you further:
www.bbsa.org.uk

The Make it Safe website contains further information, videos and brochures.
www.makeitsafe.org.uk



* All BBSA members are part of the BBSA's Make it Safe campaign. Make it Safe dealers are not full members of the BBSA but have shown their commitment to child safety by joining the campaign.

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