

EU Restrictions on the Use of Hazardous Magnets in Toys

Recently, many safety recalls in the world have been found related to the magnet detaching from children's products. Following the ASTM F963-07¹, United Kingdom and France have also published their own requirements to regulate the products containing magnets.



United Kingdom

British Toys and Hobby Association (BTHA) issued a *Code of Practice for the Use of Hazardous Magnets* in July 2007. The full text can be assessed through:

<http://www.btha.co.uk/publications/BTHA%20COP%20Magnets2.doc?PHPSESSID=697454ddb170d9ab19532f85d2c2b441>

The purpose of the Code is intended to reduce the risk of ingestion or inhalation of small powerful magnets¹ in toys.

Requirements: -

- Toy intended for children over 36 months containing strong magnets¹ shall bear the warnings if the toy, before or after abuse tests, liberates a magnet or magnetic component that fits entirely within the volume or envelop of any of the following templates (see **Figure 1**).
 - a) A cylinder with a length of not more than 32 mm and a diameter of not more than 11 mm; or
 - b) A disk with diameter of not more than 26 mm and a thickness of not more than 5 mm; or
 - c) A sphere with a diameter of not more than 22 mm; or
 - d) Any solid that will fit entirely within the volume or envelope of any of the above defined shapes.
- The followings, however, are not covered by the requirements of this Code.
 - a) Magnets used in motors, relays, speakers, electrical components and similar devices where the magnetic properties are not part of the play pattern of the toy;
 - b) Toys for children under 36 months.

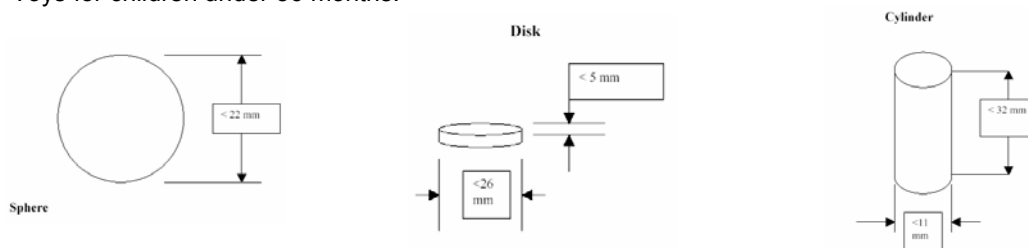


Figure 1

Warnings: -

- On Retail Packaging:

'WARNING! This product contains small magnets that can be hazardous if swallowed. Seek immediate medical attention if magnet(s) are swallowed or inhaled.'
- On Instructions for Use (or Leaflet)²:

'WARNING! This product contains (a) small magnet(s) that if swallowed can stick together across intestines causing serious infections. Seek immediate medical attention if magnet(s) are swallowed or inhaled.'

¹ Powerful magnet / Strong magnet – a magnet which has a magnetic flux index > 50.

² Equivalent text which clearly conveys the same warning is also acceptable.

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France

In view of the risk of hazardous magnets, the French authorities have published a fast track recommendation regarding the warning requirement for toys containing small ingestible magnets which are accessible to children as a temporary measure awaiting for the publication of standard requirements. The recommendation (***Avis aux fabricants, importateurs et distributeurs relatif à l'application du décret no 89-662 du 12 septembre 1989 modifié relatif à la prévention des risques résultant de l'usage des jouets***) was published in French Official Journal on September 27, 2007. The full text can be assessed through:

http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/imagesJOE/2007/0927/joe_20070927_0224_0089.pdf

This recommendation requiring toys containing small ingestible magnets which are accessible to children for the French market shall bear the following (or equivalent) warning on the toy packaging as soon as possible, preferably before January 1, 2008.

« Attention ! Risque de lésions digestives graves si des aimants sont avalés ! »

As year end is the high season for purchasing toys, signs informing consumers of the risks arising out of toys comprising small accessible magnets shall be displayed at the points of sale. These recommendations will be withdrawn when measures are adopted by all Member States of the European Community.

Europe



On June 5, 2007, the EC Commission issued a mandate to the European Standardisation Organization (**CEN**) to revise within 24 months the relevant European standard in order to cover the specific risks of toys containing small magnets. Temporary measure such as warnings would be instrumental to address in a proportionate way the risk described pending the adoption of the standard, which aims at providing authorities with a precise benchmark to assess the safety of toys with regard to the specific risks that magnets may pose.

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For enquires or other information on toys and reliability testing, please contact STR at:

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