

New crib regulations set standard for safety

Beginning this summer, updated regulations for crib manufacturers will set a new standard for safety — one that worship centers should take into consideration when providing day care or nursery services.

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) voted unanimously late last year to approve the new federal safety regulations, which went into effect on June 28, 2011. The mandatory crib standard stops the manufacture and sale of dangerous, traditional drop-side cribs, requires mattress supports be built stronger, crib hardware be more durable and safety testing become more rigorous.

Kim Dulic, spokesperson for CPSC, said the new standard brings about several requirements for the manufacturing of cribs:

- Traditional crib with drop-side rails can no longer be made or sold. It simply does not comply.
- Wood bed frame slats have to be stronger to prevent breakage.
- Hardware must be strengthened to prevent loosening from wear and tear.
- Mattress support is required to be more durable.

“The new standard aims to prevent tragedies and keep children safe in their cribs,” Dulic said.

Since 2007, CPSC has recalled more than 11 million dangerous cribs. Detached drop-side rails were associated with at least 32 infant suffocation and strangulation deaths since 2000, while defective hardware caused additional deaths.

Although these regulations will not immediately affect congregations, effective December 28, 2012, all child care facilities and places of public accommodation, such as hotels and motels, must have compliant cribs in their facilities.

Dulic said there are a few things congregations should keep in mind as they prepare for the new regulations:

- This is more than a drop-side crib issue. Immobilizing the crib will not make it compliant.
- You cannot determine compliance by looking at the product.
- The new standard applies to all full-size and nonfull-size cribs, including wood, metal and stackable cribs.
- If you purchased a crib prior to the June 28, 2011, effective date and you are unsure if it meets the new federal standard, CPSC recommends you verify it does by asking for a proof of compliance document from the manufacturer or retailer.

Jim Swedenburg, director of cooperative program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions, said that although worship centers will have nearly two years before mandatory compliance, the best practice is to immediately comply with the new standard by replacing your cribs.

"No one is going to come around and inspect the cribs and force religious organizations to comply, but if they don't comply, they're still going to be taking a risk," Swedenburg said. "If a parent had a child that was injured in a noncompliant crib and that day care knew safer cribs were available, but never changed that crib, that's going to put them at a greater risk for any kind of liability judgment."

Complying with the new standard early sends a positive message to parents within your congregation.

"When guests come to a congregation looking for a place to attend and enter a preschool facility and they see a dropside crib, they're going to say, 'These folks are not taking care of my kids,'" Swedenburg said. "They might be wrong about that assumption, but any time congregations fail to do something that even the parents are aware of, they're going to think the worship center is not safe."

If replacing every crib right away isn't feasible, Swedenburg offers some suggestions to make the transition easier.

"Have a plan in place to convert to compliant cribs by the 2012 deadline," he said. "Plan to set aside some funds on a monthly basis or just purchase cribs one at a time as you're able."

You also can visit the CPSC website at www.cpsc.gov for a list of companies that have recalled their cribs and are providing immobilizers to secure the drop-side.

"This will not meet the new standard for stronger mattress support, slats and hardware, but it is a reasonable effort to provide safer cribs between now and December 28, 2012," Swedenburg said.

Joeli Meerdink operates Dinkazoo Day Care out of her home in Madison, Wis. She said although there are very strict state licensing regulations in place for day care providers, there are steps congregations can take to prevent unsafe sleeping situations for the children under their care.

"Never use blankets, stuffed animals or pillows in a crib with a baby. They can cause suffocation," Meerdink said. "Also be sure the sheets are tightly fitted to prevent the baby from getting tangled."

Although Meerdink uses a crib for her own daughter, she uses pack-and-play playpens for her day care children. Both, however, are inspected by state licensors during semiannual visits.

"Make sure whichever structure you use, that it's up to date. You'll often find that the older ones have some sort of recall," Meerdink said.

Dulic offers some additional safety precautions for congregations to take when using cribs in a day care facility:

- Use a firm, tight-fitting mattress
- Never use extra padding, blankets or pillows
- Do not use positioning devices — they are unnecessary and can be deadly
- Regularly check cribs for loose, missing or broken parts or slats
- Do not try to fix a broken crib — simply dispose of it
- Place cribs or playpens away from windows and window covering cords to avoid fall and strangulation hazards
- Place baby monitor cords away from cribs or playpens to avoid strangulation

If your congregation has questions about crib safety or the new regulations, Dulic encourages you to contact CPSC.

"We're always available to discuss any questions," Dulic said. "It's so important. We want people to comply and make the compliance process as easy as possible."

Resources

- For more information, visit the CPSC website at www.cpsc.gov.

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