UNITED STATES
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20207

Memorandum

Date: November 10, 1999

TO : The File

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SUBJECT : Toy-Related Deaths and Injuries, Calendar Year 1998

This memorandum provides information on toy-related deaths and injuries reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for January 1, 1998 through December 31, 1998.

DEATHS

Fourteen toy-related deaths were reported to the Commission that occurred in 1998.[1] The toys involved in these fatal incidents were as follows:

Reported Toy-Related Deaths Calendar Year 1998

Type of Toy/Cause of Death	# of Deaths
TOTAL	**14**
Balloons (Choking/Aspiration)	4
Riding Toys (Drowning)	3
Tricycle (MVA)	1
Miniature Pool Game Ball (Choking)	1
Dart from Toy Gun (Choking)	1
Toy Coin from Toy Cash Register (Choking)	1
Part of a Toy Ice Cream Cone (Choking)	1
Small Toy Rubber Eyeball (Bowel Obstruction)	1
Inflatable Toy Shark (Suffocation)	1

Source: CPSC Death Certificate, In-depth Investigation and Reported Incidents files, 1/1/98 through 12/31/98.

[1] This compares to 13 deaths reported for 1997. However, these numbers do not represent a sample of known probability of selection, nor do they include all the toy-related deaths occurring during the 1998 time period, in part because reporting is not complete for some data sources.

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Victims of the 14 fatal incidents ranged in age from 7 months to 8 years old. The cause of death in 8 of the fatalities was choking or aspiration. Four children (8, 5, and 4 years and 7 months) choked on or aspirated balloons. The four remaining choking deaths were as follows:

- An 11-month-old male ingested a miniature pool game ball, which blocked his airway. He died from brain damage a week later.
- A 19-month-old male was chewing on an ice cream cone toy with its top missing. His mother came into the room and found the child with part of the cone lodged in his throat. The victim died the next day.
- A toy coin from a toy cash register lodged in a 2-year-old male's throat resulting in death.
- A 4-year-old female with a history of cerebral palsy and asthma died after she choked on a dart from a toy gun.

Other deaths included:

- Two drownings in pools (a 2-year-old male and an 18-month-old female) and one drowning in a river (a 1-year-old female) involved riding toys.
- A passing car struck a 6-year-old male on a tricycle.
- A 2-year-old male died of bowel obstruction from ingesting a small toy rubber eyeball.
- A 3-year-old male suffocated when he put a burst inflatable toy shark over his head.

ESTIMATED INJURIES (NEISS)[2]

In 1998 there were an estimated 153,400 toy-related injuries treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms. Injury estimates for the past five years are shown in the table below.

Estimated Toy-Related Injuries 1994 to 1998

Calendar Year	Estimated Injuries	Adjusted Estimated Injuries[3]
1994	165,800	154,400
1995	150,800	139,300
1996	140,700	130,000
1997	141,300	141,300
1998	153,400	153,400[4]

Source: National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS)

[2] The source of these data is the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), which is based on a statistical sample of hospital emergency room treated injuries.

[3] The NEISS sample was redesigned beginning in 1997. Estimates for 1994 through 1996 have been adjusted to be comparable to the 1997 data.

[4] There are no long-term trends for estimated toy-related injuries for 1994 through 1998. However, comparing 1997 to 1998 there is a borderline significant increase in toy-related injuries (p=.058).

Seventy-nine percent (121,500) of the injuries for 1998 were to children under 15 years of age and 45 percent (69,100) were to children under 5. Most of the victims (98%) were treated and released from the hospital. Fifty-four percent of the total injuries (83,500) occurred to the head and face area which includes head, face, eyeball, mouth and ear.

Arms, from shoulder to finger, accounted for 20 percent of the injuries, while the leg and foot area accounted for 15 percent. The individual body parts having the most injuries overall were faces (38,900), heads (19,500) and fingers (9,900). Lacerations, contusions and abrasions were involved in over half of the total injuries (58%). Overall, males were involved in 61 percent of the toy-related injuries.

Where the type of toy was specifically identified,[5] riding toys continued to be associated with more injuries than any other group of toys, accounting for 24,800 estimated injuries in 1998. Of the riding toys, wagons and tricycles were once again associated with the highest number of injuries, with about 7,000 and 6,500 injuries respectively.

[5] For about 78,300 estimated injuries the type of toy associated with the injury was not specified.