

Friday, 6 March 2009

RETAILERS WARNED OVER SALE OF UNSAFE BLIND CORDS

Five warnings have been issued to South Australian retailers and one to their supplier in the past month for selling blinds and curtains that breach new mandatory standards recommended by the coroner.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gail Gago says of the 27 traders visited, five were selling products without the correct warning labels or instructions.

“These products have been immediately withdrawn from sale and the retailers will be receiving another unannounced visit by safety inspectors to check their stock is compliant,” says the Minister.

“Failure to comply risks prosecution under the *Trade Standards Act* carrying a maximum \$10,000 fine.

A ban on the sale and supply of dangerous blind and curtain cords was introduced to SA on the 27th of January 2009, following a coronial recommendation arising from the death of a toddler.

By making the national standard mandatory in SA it means most blinds and curtains need to be supplied along with an inexpensive two-pronged hook, or for beaded chains a tensioning wheel.

Labels warning about the risks of cords to children also need to be included on the product along with installation instructions in any packaging.

“Even though the number of deaths resulting from unsafe blind and curtain cords isn’t substantial – any death is significant,” says Ms Gago.

“It’d be crazy and grossly irresponsible not to act on the coroner’s recommendation by demanding the simple inclusion of a \$2 hook in blind and curtain cord packaging.

“Warning labels are also an important safety feature of blind and curtain cords because they explain the need to install safety devices correctly, and how to use them.

“This has to go along with appropriate warning labels and instructions to promote the proper installation and message about the dangers of not securing looped curtain and blind cords.

“Families should be warned that Government’s can introduce standards – but its up to them to ensure the hooks are put to good use to be effective.

“The ban was introduced to protect young children from injuries and even strangulation from looped blind and curtain cords.”

Minister Gago is reminding consumers with existing blinds and curtains of the importance of using safety devices with corded blinds and curtains to prevent injury.

Consumers should ensure that:

- Looped cords are fastened tightly against walls with a two pronged hook or cord tensioning device. The end of looped cords should not be within 1.6 metres from the floor.
- Furniture - including cots, beds and high chairs - is placed well away from curtain or blind cords. Remove any climbing hazards.

“The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs will do all it can to enforce the new safety requirements, and I urge consumers to follow these simple precautions to reduce the hazards to small children.”

For further information or advice contact OCBA’s product safety section on 8152 0732 or 131 882 for country callers, or visit www.ocba.sa.gov.au