



APR 22 2013

Dear Department of Defense Housing Partners:

Every month nearly one child dies and another one is injured from window coverings cords, and some of these victims are in military families. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has designated window coverings with exposed cords to be one of the top five hidden hazards in homes with young children. Strangulation deaths and near strangulations can occur anywhere a window covering has a cord. Children can wrap the cords around their necks or become entangled in the loops of tangled cords. These tragic incidents happen quickly and silently—and they are preventable.

At the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Department of Defense, we care deeply about the safety of children in military homes. We are sure you do as well. The risk to military families is significant because a large percentage of families have children less than six years of age (37.4 per cent)—the same age that most strangulation deaths occur. In addition, because military parents are deployed months at a time, supervision becomes more challenging.

To minimize the risk associated with corded window coverings, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Department of Defense strongly encourage you to replace old window coverings with cordless options or window coverings with inaccessible cords, as well as take time to educate your residents about the risk of strangulation with exposed cords. To help further educate your residents, attached are: a window covering safety alert, a child proofing checklist, and a listing of seven hidden hazards in the home. We suggest that you conspicuously display the safety alert for at least 120 days and distribute the child proofing and hidden hazards checklists to all of your residents.

In the past, many consumers have obtained free retrofit kits from the Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC) for blinds made before November 2000. However, you should be aware that these retrofit kits do not address the dangling pull cord hazard associated with many common window blinds.

Thank you for joining with us in the prevention of child strangulation by window covering cords.

Inez Tenenbaum  
Chairman  
U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

John C. Conger  
Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense  
(Installations and Environment)



# CPSC Safety Alert

## Are Your Window Coverings Safe?

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has identified window coverings with cords as one of the top five hidden hazards in the home. To prevent tragic child strangulations, CPSC recommends the use of cordless window coverings in all homes where children live or visit.

About once a month a child between 7 months and 10 years old dies from window cord strangulation and another child suffers a near strangulation. In recent years, CPSC has recalled over five million window coverings, including Roman shades, roller and roll-up blinds, vertical and horizontal blinds.

Strangulation deaths and injuries can occur anywhere in the house where a window covering with a cord is installed. Children can wrap window covering cords around their necks or can pull cords that are not clearly visible but are accessible and become entangled in the loops. These incidents happen quickly and silently.

### Window covering cords present the following four deadly hazards:

1

#### **Pull Cords:**

Children can strangle when they wrap the cord around their necks or become trapped in the loop created when loose cords get entangled. Even if cleats are used to wrap excess pull cords, if installed within the child's reach, the cords above the cleat present a hazard.



2

#### **Looped Bead Chains or Nylon Cords:**

Children can strangle in the free-standing loops.





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## 3 Inner Cords of Roman Shades

- Children can pull out an exposed inner cord on the back side of Roman shades, wrap it around their necks and strangle.
- Children can place their necks in the opening between the fabric and cord and strangle.



## 4 Lifting Loops of Roll-up Blinds

- If the lifting loops (that raise and lower the blinds) slide off the side of the blind, they form a free-standing loop in which a child can become entangled and strangle.
- Children can place their necks between the lifting loop and the roll-up blind material and strangle.



**CPSC offers the following safety tips to prevent deaths and injuries associated with window covering cords:**

- Examine all shades and blinds in the home. CPSC recommends the use of cordless window coverings in all homes where children live or visit. Make sure there are no accessible cords on the front, side, or back of the product.
- Do not place cribs, beds, and furniture close to the windows because children can climb on them and gain access to the cords.
- Make loose cords inaccessible.
- If the window shade has looped bead chains or nylon cords, install tension devices to keep the cord taut.

**Note:** Most window blinds sold prior to November 2000 have inner cords (for raising the slats of the blinds) that can be pulled by a child and form a loop in which the child's neck can entangle. Consumers should immediately repair these types of blinds. For a free repair kit, call the Window Covering Safety Council at 800-506-4636 or visit [windowcoverings.org](http://windowcoverings.org). Consumers should know that WCSC's retrofit kits do not address the dangling pull cord hazard associated with many common window blinds.

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