

Dangerous toys prompt safe shopping advice for Christmas

Parents are being urged to take extra care when buying toys this Christmas after Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards discovered dangerous items for sale online. The advice is part of the county council's commitment to ensuring everyone shops safely during the festive period.

All toys must be supplied or marked with the following information (in accordance with the Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011), but worryingly, this isn't always the case:

- Toys must show the CE mark This is a claim by the manufacturer that the product will meet essential safety requirements during foreseeable and normal use.
- All toys must be marked with the manufacturer's name, registered trade name or trade mark and a contact address. If the toy has come from outside Europe, the importer's details must also be on the product.
- Toys must be accompanied by instructions for use, safety information and appropriate warnings for the type of toy. For example, *'not suitable for children under 36 months'*

Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards team carries out enforcement work to protect consumers, residents and the environment, and to help promote a thriving local economy.

The team recently found toys not marked with the necessary information. They fear such toys don't comply with essential safety requirements.

Trading Standards have concerns about magnetic putty toys containing high levels of arsenic and lead, as well as having small magnets which are too strong and could potentially cause injury if swallowed.

Decorative water beads (which expand in size in water) have also been reported to Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards for being wrongly advertised and marketed as toys. These beads could be mistaken as sweets by young children.

There have been reports, in the past, of such toys expanding up to over 400 times their original size when immersed in water, if swallowed there is potential for them to expand and cause intestinal obstruction, vomiting, severe discomfort and dehydration, and in extreme cases they might need to be surgically removed.

Councillor Judith Heathcoat, the County Council's Cabinet Member for Community Safety, said: "Christmas should be a happy time for families, and a joy for children as they enthusiastically open their gifts. Please follow our safety advice, so you're confident every gift is safe, with correct instructions and labelling."

Anyone with concerns about the safety or labelling of toys can contact Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **03454 04 05 06**.

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