



Scott Barnett Emerald

OSPIRG student coordinator Jennifer Burns displays one of many toys that parents should avoid buying their young children because of possible choking hazards.

OSPIRG warns parents about dangerous toys

■ Dangerous toys include plastic play jewelry, small erasers and foam baby blocks.

By Jeremy Lang
Oregon Daily Emerald

The hot "must have" toys change with every Christmas season from Tickle Me Elmo to the Furby to Pokémon, but, according to OSPIRG, every year there is a group of toys that are potentially dangerous and possibly fatal to children.

At a Nov. 23 press conference, OSPIRG released a national report alerting parents and consumers to toys this holiday season that can cause choking, strangling or toxic chemical hazards.

OSPIRG member Jennifer Burns, who helped organize the event at the Spencer View Co-op Family Center in Eugene, identified 35 toys that OSPIRG said could be harmful to infants, toddlers and young children, based on a series of their own tests.

"Many times, toys don't carry the proper warning labels and parents don't even realize they can be hazardous," she said.

The toys on the list included plastic play jewelry, small erasers, toy cars with small, breakable parts, plastic rings, balloons, foam baby blocks and wooden toys with pullcords.

To demonstrate, Burns used a small choke tube to represent a child's windpipe and show how easily small parts can fall off toys or the toys themselves can choke a child. She also showed how cords on toys have the ability to wrap around and strangle children and that many teething toys, such as rattles and foam play books, can be made out of toxic chemicals such as thalylates, which Burns said is a probable human carcinogen, although it hasn't been proven.

ASUO Nontraditional Student Advocate Kathleen Workman also spoke with her five-year-old daughter. She said she has bought some of the toys on the list for her

Tips for buying safe toys

Be vigilant shoppers: Shoppers should examine toys carefully for hidden dangers before making a purchase.

If a toy looks unsafe, don't buy it: If you see small parts or a small ball or a balloon and don't see a tough choke hazard warning, call the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Keep small parts away from toddlers: Do so particularly if an older child has toys with small parts.

Be wary in all stores: While the majority of hazards are found in drug stores, party stores and dollar stores, hazardous toys are found in large national toy stores as well.

SOURCE: PIRG Toy Safety Web site, www.toysafety.net

daughter in the past.

"As a parent, I showed that the impact is real and gave a face to the danger," Workman said.

Suzy Blanchard, the director of Spencer View, agreed that parents need to be educated on toy safety and said parents should also know that they don't have to spend a lot of money on elaborate gifts to please their children.

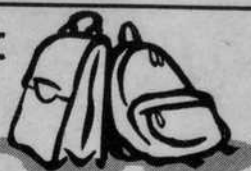
"Many people stress on how to pay for so many toys when there are many simple things that young children will enjoy," Blanchard said.

Workman added she hopes that not only parents but also child care providers check the list of toys and make sure they don't have them either.

"Ultimately, I'd like to see that stores and manufacturers are made responsible, but it is probably more reasonable that parents just need to be informed," she said.

For more information, access www.toysafety.net where consumers can find a complete list of the 35 hazardous toys, along with tips on how to test toys and be safe in general.

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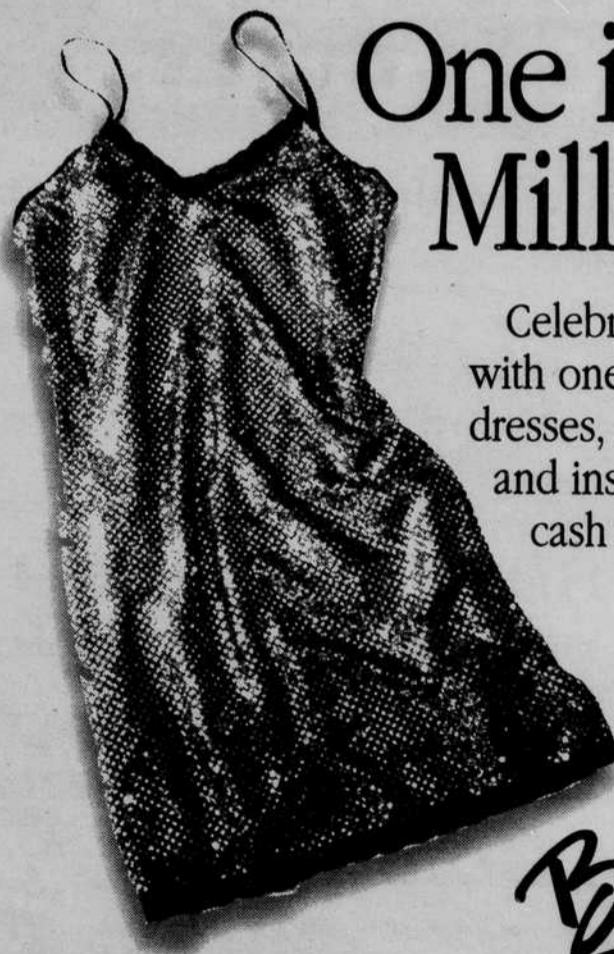
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