



MEDIA RELEASE

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Product safety priorities focus on button battery safety

Consumer household products with button batteries, including children's toys, should have secure battery safety compartments, child resistant packaging and clear information and warning labels, under proposed new mandatory standards put forward by the ACCC for consultation.

[Button battery safety](#) is a key part of the ACCC's [Product Safety Priorities for 2020](#), which show how the ACCC will focus its efforts to ensure consumers are not exposed to potentially unsafe products.

"Button batteries are a serious safety risk. Sadly, two children in Australia have died from incidents involving button batteries, and many more have been hospitalised with serious, long term injuries," ACCC Deputy Chair Delia Rickard said.

The safety issues arise when children gain access to the battery. Young children in particular are at the greatest risk due to their narrower oesophagus and tendency to place small objects into their mouths, ears and noses.

Currently, there is no specific mandatory regulation in Australia or overseas to address the hazards associated with button batteries across the wide range of consumer products that use them."

"The ACCC has investigated the safety issues with button batteries and considered the regulatory options available. We are proposing new mandatory standards to improve button battery safety," Ms Rickard said.

"Without such mandatory safety standards it is likely we will continue to see further deaths and serious injuries associated with button batteries,"

"We believe such safety measures would significantly reduce the risk of children gaining access to and ingesting button batteries," Ms Rickard said.

In addition to button battery safety, other product safety priorities focusing on children include addressing unsafe infant sleeping products, and scoping risk controls for toppling furniture.

Small children tend to climb on furniture, which if unsecured, can fall on a child or trap and crush them underneath. Nationally, at least 22 children under the age of nine have died in Australia from toppling furniture or televisions between 2011 and 2018.

Additional priorities for 2020 include improving product safety in e-commerce and finalising the compulsory recall of dangerous Takata airbags, with suppliers required to meet their airbag replacement deadline by 31 December 2020.

"The Takata compulsory recall has been the biggest recall in Australian history. We are now in the final stages of the recall, and will be working with manufacturers as well as other stakeholders to ensure they get these potentially deadly airbags off the road," Ms Rickard said.

The ACCC will also continue to dedicate resources to its core product safety functions such as monitoring voluntary recalls, reviewing mandatory safety standards, undertaking hazard assessments and conducting surveillance of unsafe products.

The full list of the ACCC's [2020 Product Safety Priorities](#) is available online.

Background

Button battery safety

Button batteries, also known as coin-cell batteries, include all flat, round, batteries with diameters up to 32 mm and heights ranging from 1–11 mm. This includes lithium, alkaline, silver oxide and zinc-air button battery types.

Button batteries are used in a wide range of personal and household products, including children's toys, lights, watches, remote controls, digital thermometers, greeting cards and bathroom scales.

In 2019, the then Assistant Treasurer issued a Safety Warning Notice to the Australian public about the dangers of button batteries, and asked the ACCC to develop regulation to address button battery safety.

The ACCC has issued a [consultation paper](#) outlining its assessment of regulatory options to improve button battery safety.

Public consultation is now open and submissions can be made until April 30 via the [Consultation Hub](#).

Stakeholder feedback is very important, and given the challenges confronting all stakeholders with COVID-19, the ACCC is open to working with all stakeholders that may have challenges meeting the deadline to discuss alternative forms of submitting their views or deferred receipt of formal submissions.

Following consultation, the ACCC will assess submissions with a view to making a final recommendation for a new mandatory safety and information standard on button batteries, to the Minister this year.

More information about button batteries is available on the [Product Safety Australia](#) website.

Product safety priorities

As the national product safety regulator for consumer products, the ACCC identifies, prioritises and manages product safety risks across many thousands of different product types to help keep Australians safe.

Each year the ACCC reviews its Product Safety Priorities. This year, the ACCC will prioritise five key product safety issues, on top of our core product safety functions. These core functions capture the ongoing regulatory activities of the ACCC which are considered to be 'business as usual'.

The ACCC works closely with its state and territory counterparts who regulate product safety across the country. The 2020 Product Safety Priorities are endorsed as national priorities by state and territory Australian Consumer Law regulators.

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