



Window Blind Cords and Curtain Cords The General Product Safety Regulations 2005

This fact sheet has been prepared to assist manufacturers, retailers and others in the supply chain to comply with the regulations.

Businesses who make and supply window blinds and curtains cords must be alert to the dangers posed by them and to their responsibilities under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005.

A European Commission Decision of the 27 July 2011 now addresses certain risks posed to children by internal blinds, corded window coverings and safety devices. This represents a new law and extends the scope of BS EN 13120:2009 to include other types normally excluded from the standard, see following pages.

There have been several child fatalities caused by strangulation across Europe, including several in the UK, in recent years. The cords on these window coverings pose a strangulation hazard to children as loops can be formed and children become entangled.

Most deaths have been children between 16 and 36 months old, and the majority have been in children's bedrooms, especially where cots or beds have been close to the windows. Children playing near windows or climbing on furniture are at risk.

Safe Products

The above Regulations require you to manufacture and sell "Safe Products".

A "Safe Product" is one which under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use including duration and, where applicable, putting into service, installation and maintenance requirements does not present any risk or only the minimum risk compatible with the products use, considered to be acceptable and consistent with a high level of protection for the safety and health of persons.

Some window coverings are designed without the use of cords.

New Standard

A new Standard, BS EN 13120:2009 (Internal Blinds – Performance Requirements Including Safety) is assisting businesses in manufacturing and supplying products which are safe for consumer use. The EU Decision extends the scope see the following page.

This standard can be obtained from:

BSI British Standards
389 Chiswick High Road
London
W4 4AL

For all enquiries

Telephone: +44 (0)20 8996 9001

Email: cservices@bsigroup.com

Web site: <http://www.bsigroup.com/en/Standards-and-Publications>

A European Commission Decision of the 27 July 2011 also now addresses certain risks posed to children by internal blinds, corded window coverings and safety devices. This represents a new law and is in addition to the provisions in BS EN 13120:2009.

The details of this Decision are in the Annex which follows;

ANNEX

Safety requirements for internal blinds, corded window coverings and safety devices

1. SCOPE

The safety requirements detailed in this document shall apply to all internal blinds and corded window coverings whatever their design and the nature of the materials used, such as:

- Venetian blinds,
- roller blinds,
- vertical blinds,
- pleated and honeycomb blinds,
- Roman Shades,
- Austrian/Festoon blinds,
- panel blinds,
- plantation shutters,
- roll-up blinds.

Draperies, insect screens and blinds in sealed-glazed units, if operated with cords, chains and ball-chains or similar, which are accessible and form a hazardous loop are also subject to these requirements.

These safety requirements shall refer to children (young children) aged from 0 to 42 months as a minimum.

2. REQUIREMENTS

In defining performance requirements for internal blinds and corded window coverings, it is essential to consider their reasonable foreseeable conditions of use, and the potential hazards that can result from accessible cord(s), chain(s), ball-chain(s) or similar to children.

In order to reduce the risk of strangulation and internal asphyxiation internal window blinds (and corded window coverings) shall be of an inherently safe design. Every possible means, based in the state of the art and technology, shall be considered for the safe design of the product, when used in all reasonably foreseeable environments where young children have access to or are likely to be present, such as, for example, homes, hotels, hospitals, churches, shops, schools, nurseries, and public places in general. Blinds and window coverings to be fitted in offices or any other place, which is transformed from its initial destination and where young children are likely to be present, shall also be subject to the present requirements.

Internal blinds and corded window coverings that have accessible cord(s), chain(s), ball-chain(s) or similar shall comply with the following minimum requirements:

1. cord(s), chain(s), ball-chain(s) and similar shall not form a hazardous loop;
2. if the design of the product does not eliminate the risk that a hazardous loop is formed, the product shall be provided with appropriate safety devices, to minimise the risk of strangulation;
3. safety devices shall be provided as an integral part of the product;
4. safety devices which are non-integral (such as cleats) shall be pre-installed on the operating cord(s) or chain(s) or ball-chain(s) of the blind or window covering. In addition, a warning shall be conspicuously displayed on the safety device. The warning shall convey at least the following messages: 'Children can strangle if this device is not installed. Read carefully the instructions and install accordingly. Always use this device to keep cords or chains out of reach of children'.

5. if present, the safety device(s) shall be resistant to the operation by young children. In addition, the safety device(s) shall not pose risks of physical injuries to children, due, for example, to sharp edges, entrapment of fingers or protruding parts. The safety devices shall also sustain durability and fatigue tests (wear and tear) and shall be resistant to ageing due to weather conditions. The safety device shall not release small parts that could result in internal asphyxiation of the child. EN 28.7.2011 Official Journal of the European Union L 196/23
6. cord(s), chain(s), ball-chain(s) and similar shall not release small parts which could result in internal asphyxiation of the child.

3. PRODUCT SAFETY INFORMATION

Warnings shall be provided, in a clear and conspicuous way at the point of sale, on the package, on the product and in the information for use. The warnings shall convey at least the following:

- ‘Young children have been strangled by loops in pull-cords, chains and tapes, and cords that operate the product’,
- ‘To avoid strangulation and entanglement, keep cords out of the reach of young children. Cords may become wrapped around a child’s neck’,
- ‘Move beds, cots and furniture away from window covering cords’,
- ‘Do not tie cords together. Make sure cords do not twist and create a loop’.

The warnings shall include the relevant pictogram.

The name or trademark of the manufacturer or importer and professional installer (if any) shall also be displayed on the product.

Instructions for assembling, installing and safely using the blind or the window covering (including the safety device(s)) shall be included in the package.

4. REQUIREMENTS FOR SAFETY DEVICES INTENDED FOR RETROFITTING

Internal blinds or corded window coverings fitted with the relevant safety device(s), shall fulfil the requirements set out in section 2.

The safety device(s) shall be accompanied by the following warnings, information and instructions:

- the name or trademark of the manufacturer or importer and professional installer (if any),
- the instructions: ‘*Read these instructions carefully before installing and using the device. Children can be strangled if the device is not installed correctly. Keep the instructions for future reference*’ ‘*Use of additional safety devices helps reduce the risk of strangulation but cannot be considered entirely foolproof*’,
- the instructions: ‘*Test the device if not used regularly*’ and ‘*Replace the device if it is faulty*’,
- a warning that the release of small parts could result in the internal asphyxiation of the child,
- Information on the type of internal blind or corded window covering for which the product is designed and tested,
- Information on the use (purpose, and possible limitations of the safety device),
- precise instructions on correct installation and location of the device(s). If a special assembly tool is needed, it shall be provided by the supplier of the device(s),
- the instructions shall be accompanied by pictograms to facilitate understanding,
- any other information for safe use. EN L 196/24 Official Journal of the European Union 28.7.2011

A guide to General Product Safety Regulations can be obtained from the UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills web site -

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/consumerissues/product-safety>

Resources:

- British Blind & Shutter Association - <http://www.bbsa.org.uk>
- Make it Safe Campaign - <http://www.makeitsafe.org.uk> . A video about making blinds/shutters safe is available on the web site - <http://www.makeitsafe.org.uk/video.php> (British Blind & Shutter Association)
- Blind Cord Safety Campaign (RoSPA - The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) - <http://www.rospa.com/about/currentcampaigns/blindcords>

This advice is designed to provide basic guidance to traders. It is not a complete or authoritative statement of the law. A large print version is available.

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