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For Immediate Release

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ATSPA and Safe Kids PA Share Toy Safety Tips

Mechanicsburg, Pa. – According to a U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) report, an estimated 206,400 toy-related injuries were treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments in 2021. The American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA) and Safe Kids Pennsylvania want to ensure a merry and safe holiday season.

“Adults everywhere are about to embark on the country’s busiest toy-buying season,” said Jessica Ritter, Safe Kids Pennsylvania State Office Coordinator. Approximately 50 percent of all United States toy purchases are made between Black Friday and Christmas. “Taking the time to make sure toys and gifts are safe and appropriate for the child is the best way to ensure a happy holiday season.”

“The first steps to ensure their safety are reading the warning labels and purchasing the proper toys,” adds Krista Brands, ATSPA CEO.

ATSPA and Safe Kids PA offer these tips to ensure safe gift giving this year:

- **Child- and Family-Specific Considerations**
 - **Be sure to purchase age-appropriate toys.** Take a moment to read the warning label and locate the suggested age range. This information is meant to help ensure the safety of children. Consider if the toy has small pieces or accessories that could be a choking hazard for children and pets, or if it may heat up and need parental supervision to avoid burns. For electronic toys and games, check the content to make sure it’s appropriate for the child’s age.
 - **Consider allergies:** Be aware of any allergies the child may have and avoid toys made from materials that could trigger allergic reactions.
 - **Consider the space and storage capacity of the family.** If the toy is large or requires a lot of space, consider whether the child has enough room to play with it safely.
 - **Listen to toys that make noise.** Sometimes, children might be scared by toys that make sudden or loud noises, so make sure to listen before you buy.
 - **Consider buying an experience, rather than a toy.** Sometimes, families and children either don’t have space for more toys or do not really need them. Instead, consider gifting the child and/or family an experience -like a trip to the zoo, art classes, concert tickets, a family board game, or a picnic lunch in a park. It does not have to be expensive to be memorable.
- **Toy-Specific Considerations**
 - **Avoid choking hazards.** Young children often put items in their mouths, so it’s important to keep this in mind when purchasing toys. Avoid toys with small parts that may be choking hazards for young children. Toys with long strings or cords can pose a strangulation risk -make sure that if they are present, they are short and not looped. Finally, if a toy is electronic, it likely contains magnets -make sure that the battery compartments are securely closed and not easily opened without a tool.



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- **Know the dangers of button batteries.** According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than 2,500 children ingest button batteries every year, leading to severe injury and even death. Keep a close eye on batteries and gifts or cards that require them, as well as other 'everyday' items that may have them, including remote controls, singing greeting cards, watches, hearing aids, key fobs, tea light candles, flashing holiday jewelry, decorations, and others. If a children's toy requires batteries, make sure the battery compartment is secure and that screws are used to keep it closed.
- **Buy non-toxic materials:** Since children are known for putting things in their mouth, ensure that any paints, crayons, markers, putty, play clay, etc. are non-toxic. Make sure that there is no lead in the toys and pay close attention to children when they are using these items to prevent ingestion.
- **Buy additional safety gear if necessary.** If giving a toy like a bicycle or skateboard, make sure to also include appropriate safety gear like a helmet, knee, and elbow pads.
- **Look for toys that encourage education or imagination.** Rather than focusing only on entertainment, look for toys that also have educational value or encourage more imaginative play. Educational toys can include things like letter boards, books, puzzles, and more. Toys that encourage creativity and open play may be things like building blocks, magnetic tiles, play doh, costumes, dolls or pretend animals, and many more!

Additionally, ATSPA and Safe Kids PA suggest that caregivers stay informed about the products their children are using. All toys intended for use by children 12 years of age and under are required by law to be third-party tested and certified to "ASTM" -American Society for Testing and Materials -standards if they were manufactured or imported on or after February 28, 2018. If you're purchasing second-hand toys that are older than that date, you will need to be more aware of various safety concerns. Also, always check for recalls – Safe Kids makes it easy for you by sending e-mail alerts. Anyone can sign up at www.safekids.org/product-recalls.

More information on safe toys is available at www.pasafekids.org or by calling (717) 766-1616.

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The American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division is a non-profit organization committed to injury prevention and mitigation through education, intervention, and advocacy. Our work includes providing presentations and educational materials on many trauma prevention topics, including concussions, water safety, senior falls, bike safety, traffic safety and much more. For information, call 717-766-1616 and visit www.atspa.org.

Safe Kids Pennsylvania (SKPA) is part of Safe Kids Worldwide's global network dedicated to keeping kids safe from preventable childhood injury, which is the number one cause of death among children ages 1 to 19. These injuries range from accidental falls, to poisonings, car crashes, drownings, and many more. SKPA promotes and supports childhood injury prevention activities through education, collaboration, and advocacy throughout Pennsylvania. Safe Kids Pennsylvania is one of many statewide coalitions under Safe Kids Worldwide, and is led by the American Trauma Society, PA Division. For more information on Safe Kids PA, visit our website at <https://www.pasafekids.org/> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/safekidspa/>.