

Facts



Information

www.consumer.tas.gov.au

Hotline : 1300 65 44 99



Product Safety and Standards

Issues concerning product safety in Tasmania are the responsibility of the Measurement and Standards Branch within Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading.

An unsafe product is one that is considered likely to inflict harm or even death because it doesn't work as it is meant to, it falls short of its stated quality, or because it isn't accompanied by sufficient instructions for its use.

The Measurement and Standards Branch works in several ways to ensure that the safety standard of products available to the public remains high. Some of its main activities include:

- working with industry, other government agencies and consumer organisations to develop voluntary product standards;
- implementing and enforcing mandatory standards and bans;
- investigating potentially hazardous products;
- educating consumers and traders about product safety;
- carrying out product safety audits and surveys; and
- answering product safety enquiries.

In Tasmania there are three pieces of legislation that deal with product safety: the *Sale of Hazardous Goods Act 1977*, the *Flammable Clothing Act 1973*, and the *Goods (Trade Descriptions) Act 1971*. These either prohibit or regulate the supply or manufacture of products available to Tasmanian consumers. Further information on these Acts can be found at www.consumer.tas.gov.au/product_safety.

Standards

Standards set out descriptions and specifications of products, information, and procedures to ensure that they remain consistent and function in the manner in which they were intended. Standards also set out a common language for a product and define its quality and safety criteria.

In this way consumers can be confident that a product purchased in one part of the country will be of the same quality and perform consistently with the same product obtained in another.

Standards are usually developed by private sector organisations and arise from a public need. They are normally produced on a national basis and are frequently adopted by government as mandatory standards in legislation.



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Maintaining a fair, safe and equitable marketplace

Recalls

If a supplier or manufacturer considers a product is unsafe there is the facility to recall it. Recalled products can either be modified by the manufacturer on return by the purchaser, or a refund may be given. Most recalls are initiated voluntarily by the manufacturer or supplier once they become aware of some aspect that affects the safety of the product.

However, under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*, the Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs has the power to order a compulsory recall of a product in Australia if it can cause injury and the supplier has not taken satisfactory steps to prevent the risk associated with the product.

Product Safety and Information Standards

Within Australia's manufacturing and retail industries there are also product safety and information standards that are enforced by Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading.

These are introduced when a product is seen to be especially hazardous. Rather than banning the supply of such a product the government can set certain conditions on its design, methods of manufacture, or on the instructions that come with it. Some examples of these are safety standards for the construction of toys for children under three years, and ingredient labeling for cosmetics and clothing products.

Australian product suppliers and manufacturers have an obligation to supply only safe products and they must ensure that their products meet the relevant safety standards. They must also make sure that clear instructions for the use of products are included, as well as warnings against their possible misuse.

For further information on product safety and standards visit the Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading web site at www.consumer.tas.gov.au.

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