

Bunk beds have been identified as a potential source of serious injury in the home, especially to young children. Bunk beds should never be used as a play area or climbing frame.

## Hanging is the most serious bunk bed hazard.

Make sure nothing on the bed's structure protrudes over 8mm. This prevents clothing becoming snagged and risking strangulation.

## Falls from bunk beds

Falls from bunk beds commonly result in fractures or concussion. Accident reports show that about 50 percent of bunk bed injuries are due to falls from the top bunk during the night, 6 percent from falls getting up to or down from the top bunk, and 44 percent due to falls from the top bunk while playing.

A mandatory consumer product safety standard for bunk beds has been introduced and took effect from 1 November 2002. The mandatory standard is based on the Australian/New Zealand safety standard AS/NZ 4220:1994 bunk beds (with variations) that covers the essential safety features of bunk beds.

Always choose a bunk bed that complies with the mandatory standard. Look for a label or sticker that says the bunk bed complies with the mandatory standard. If there isn't one ask the retailer. If compliance cannot be verified, do not buy the bunk bed.

## The Main Points to Check

### Who will use the bunk bed?

Children under nine years should **NEVER** be allowed on the top bunk as there is the risk that they could become trapped in some spaces on the bunk ends or guardrail. Injuries do not substantially reduce with bunk beds until children reach nine years of age.

### Is there adequate roll-out protection for the top bunk?

- The ends and sides of the top bunk should be fitted with a safety rail or guard, the top of which is at least 160mm above the top of the mattress.
- The guardrail must have a clearly defined mark indicating the maximum height of the mattress unless the height of the guardrail from the mattress base is at least 360mm.
- All four sides of the top bunk should have roll-out protection.

### Are there any entrapment hazards?

- There must be no gaps between 95mm and 230mm in the vicinity of the top bunk and in the guardrail. These gaps create head entrapments as some children's bodies are small enough to pass through these gaps but their heads are not. They can become trapped and die by hanging under their own weight. **This is a very serious and real hazard - remember you cannot supervise children 24 hours a day.**

### Where will the bunk be located?

- Allow plenty of clear space between the sides and ends of bunks. The upper bunk **MUST** be more than 2 metres from any ceiling fan. Adults should be able to safely access the top bunk without the added risk of getting in the way of moving fan blades.
- Provide some form of lighting for the person in the top bunk (night light, bedside lamp, torch) to make it safer getting in and out of bed.
- Never place bunk beds near a window. Blind cords can cause strangulation and broken glass can cause fatal injury.

### Ladders and Mattresses

- Properly attached ladders are important to provide safe access to and from the top bunk, especially during the night.
- The correct size mattress should fit snugly into the bed frame with a gap of no more than 25mm (1 inch) between it and the bed sides. A mattress this size prevents any dangerous gaps from occurring for small children to slide through. Never use a mattress in the top bunk that is thicker than the manufacturer recommends.
- Remember that a gap of at least 160mm must be maintained between the top of the mattress and the top of the guardrail.

## Product Safety Alert

### Regular Maintenance

- Regularly check the bed and attend to any loose bolts, broken parts or splinters.
- Remember to follow the manufacturer's assembly instructions closely.
- If the bunk bed is supplied with a tool, keep it in a safe place for future maintenance.
- Check pipe ends are plugged on tubular steel bunk beds.
- Nuts and bolts should be tight, flush and smooth.

### Important information for makers and suppliers of bunk beds

If you make, import, distribute, hire or sell bunk beds (either new or second hand) you must comply with the mandatory safety standard **AS/NZ 4220:1994 Bunk Beds (with variations)**.

Bunk bed makers and suppliers should consider seeking professional advice to ensure compliance with the mandatory requirements.

Supplying goods that do not comply with a mandatory standard is an offence under the *Trade Practices Act 1974* and may result in penalties up to \$220 000 for individuals and \$1.1 million for a corporation.

### More Information

Copies of the safety standard can be obtained from:

- SAI Global by calling 131 242 or visiting its website at [www.saiglobal.com](http://www.saiglobal.com)

More information is also available from:

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) at [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au) or ring the Infocentre on 1300 302 502
- Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading at [www.consumer.tas.gov.au](http://www.consumer.tas.gov.au) or ring the hotline on 1300 65 44 99

### Safety is everyone's business!

Although the regulations cover important safety requirements, it is up to parents and caregivers to make sure the bunk beds you currently own are safe for your children.

**Note: This information is intended as a guide only and should not be relied on as legal advice.**

### CONTACT DETAILS

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## Bunk Beds – A guide for consumers and suppliers



STOP!