July 2007: Proposed Chicago Toy Magnet Restrictions are Tabled
The proposed Ordinance by the City of Chicago, Illinois, which would effectively ban toys that contain Neodymium Iron Boron (NIB) magnets as being hazardous to children, has been tabled.

June 2007: Chicago Proposes Toy Magnet Restrictions
The City of Chicago, Illinois, has proposed an Ordinance that would effectively ban toys that contain Neodymium Iron Boron (NIB) magnets as being a hazard to children. Toys that contain such magnets are typically aimed at older children. Generally the magnet component is contained in a “housing” of some kind; however, should the “housing” fail or be broken, a loose magnet can easily be swallowed by a younger child.

The proposed Ordinance would amend the City of Chicago Municipal Code to include a new section as follows: Section 2, Chapter 7-36-130, Magnet Restriction:

No toy may be sold or offered for sale, or given away without compensation that contains any parts, pieces, or components that contain magnets made of Neodymium Iron Boron and are reasonably likely or could potentially be ingested by children or would under normal use be subjected to ingestion by children, or present a potential hazard in ingestion to children.

At this time, the Chicago proposal does not provide specifics on dimensions of magnets or magnetic components, but it is likely to include any magnet or magnetic component that could fit within a child’s mouth.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) already has released a warning regarding these magnets, as dozens of incidents have been reported where magnets have fallen out of various toys, been swallowed, and the child required medical intervention or emergency surgery.

The reason NIB magnets, sometimes referred to as “rare earth magnets,” are considered particularly hazardous is that they exert a more powerful magnetic force than a typical iron ferrite magnet (as great as 100 times stronger in some instances) and can wreak havoc in a child’s gastrointestinal system. The danger is when more than one NIB magnet is swallowed, and the second magnet exerts sufficient force to attract the other through the intestinal walls. This can cause the intestine to be pinched and cut off blood supply, or create a perforation, leading to infection or blood poisoning.

The CPSC’s warnings to parents have included information on how to prevent magnet ingestion and warning signs if a magnet should be accidentally swallowed. The agency has also been working with manufacturers and the toy industry to develop voluntary standards to protect children from this hazard that is addressed in ASTM F963-07.

For more information:
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