

Government targets unsafe products online in run-up to Christmas

- Government is examining more than 1,000 products to help ensure gifts given at Christmas are safe for families
- 12,500 unsafe products, including toys, have been removed from supply so far this year alone, and testing continues through the festive period
- shoppers encouraged to check for warning signs to stay safe this Christmas

The UK government is testing more than 1,000 products to help ensure gifts given at Christmas are safe for families, Consumer Minister Paul Scully has announced today (Saturday 11 December).

The products, including toys, are from third-party sellers on online marketplaces and the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is ensuring they meet the UK's high standards for product safety, or else ensuring that they are removed from sale. If any dangerous or faulty products are identified, OPSS will contact the online marketplace to have them taken down so that Christmas gifts are safe. Consumers will be able to return products and receive a refund.

OPSS has identified goods such as toys, cosmetics and electricals that can pose particular risks. The products are checked for correct labelling and packaging and any which fail are sent away to a testing house for further investigation.

Today's announcement is the next step in enforcement action that has already seen 12,500 products removed from supply so far in 2021. OPSS officials also undertake direct enforcement action alongside Local Authority Trading Standards and Border Force.

Consumer Minister Paul Scully said:

No parent should have to worry about the safety of the toys they've bought their kids at Christmas. Sadly, there are greater threats than finding a lump of coal under the tree on Christmas morning which is why we're pulling out all the stops to keep everyone safe.

The UK has some of the highest product safety standards in the world and we're hard at work to ensure nothing from the naughty list makes its way into Santa's sleigh this Christmas.

Martyn Allen, Technical Director at Electrical Safety First (ESF), said:

We welcome this enforcement activity from OPSS, particularly in the run up to Christmas when so many people are using Online

Marketplaces to buy gifts for their loved ones. ESF is pleased to be working closely with OPSS to help identify and raise awareness of the serious safety issues, including simple checks the public can make to help ensure the products they buy are safe.

Mike Andrews, National Co-ordinator at the National Trading Standards eCrime Team, said:

Many of us will be doing our Christmas shopping online this year and so it's vital we remember there are online fraudsters out there tempting us with deals for dangerous products. Consumers should be on their guard when shopping online and check the website to ensure it is genuine before making a purchase. If you suspect products are unsafe, report the seller and the website to the Citizens Advice Scams Action service on 0808 250 5050.

How to stay safe when buying toys this Christmas

Shoppers are encouraged to stay safe when buying toys this Christmas. Steps you can take to protect you and your loved ones include:

Knowing who you are buying from

Get as much information on the seller as you can, especially if you're buying from an online marketplace. Not everything advertised on an online platform is sold by them. If the actual seller is based overseas or fails to provide an address, there are greater risks.

Always reading the warnings and instructions

Toys must be clearly marked with age restrictions, which are based on risks such as choking hazards. Always follow the age recommendations.

Looking out for hazards and checking for button batteries

Small parts and loose ribbons can pose choking and strangulation hazards. Ensure any button batteries in a toy are safely behind a screwed-down flap.

Comparing the sellers

Bargains may be too good to be true. Compare the toy's price with other sellers. If it's a fraction of the cost, it could be a counterfeit.

Checking for product recalls

[See if the toy you're buying has been recalled](#). It is the manufacturer or retailer's responsibility to notify the public if any unsafe product is recalled, but we encourage consumers to check this web page regularly for important product safety information.

Additional Information

Following a [call for evidence](#) earlier this year, the government has committed to consult on regulatory changes to address these issues including ensuring that the responsibilities of online marketplaces are clear and there is greater accountability for products sold in the UK.

In November OPSS issued an [Important Product Safety Message](#), reminding the public to check who they are buying from and providing a safety checklist for purchases.

OPSS is running a Christmas Toys product safety information campaign in the run up to Christmas, which includes warnings about button batteries, small powerful magnets, and the heightened risk of buying online from a seller outside the UK.

Last summer, the government launched a [consultation on further measures to protect consumers from online rip-offs](#). This includes tackling bogus online reviews by making it illegal to pay someone to write or host, a fake review, and helping regulators stamp out other unscrupulous tactics like businesses paying to have their product feature highly on a trader's website while hiding the fact they paid for such placement.