

Questions and Answers on the Rapid Alert System for dangerous products

What is the Rapid Alert System for non-food dangerous products?

The European Rapid Alert System for non-food dangerous products is a building block of the Single Market. It ensures that information about unsafe products withdrawn from the market and/or recalled from consumers anywhere in Europe is quickly circulated between Member States and the European Commission, so that appropriate action can be taken everywhere in the EU. **Thirty-one countries** (EU Member States together with Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) participate in the system.

The system was established by the General Product Safety [Directive](#) and became fully operational in 2004.

The most common measures are: ban/stop on sales; withdrawal of a dangerous product from the market or recall from consumers; and import rejection by the customs authorities.

What is covered by this alert system?

The system records measures taken against unsafe, **non-food, consumer products** (e.g. toys, cosmetic products, clothing, childcare products) as well as professional products (e.g. machinery, lorries), that pose a serious risk to the health and safety of citizens and to the environment.

Pharmaceutical products, medical devices and food and feed are excluded from the scope of this Rapid Alert System as they are covered by their own specific alert systems.

What is the role of national authorities in the system?

The role of national authorities is to ensure that businesses respect their obligation to place only safe products on the market.

In case unsafe products are offered for sale or detected on the market, these products must be removed or banned. To ensure that these measures are also known by the other European countries and are swiftly followed Europe-wide, this information is circulated via the Rapid Alert System. This is done via designated national [Contact Points](#) that coordinate the information exchange at national level. Alerts submitted are validated by the Commission and rapidly circulated to the participating countries for appropriate action. The results of these follow-up activities are reported back through the system.

What is expected from businesses?

Once aware that a product is dangerous, producers, importers or distributors must immediately take the necessary action to correct this situation and cooperate with national market surveillance authorities. To facilitate

compliance with the requirement, a new, user-friendly IT tool called “Product Safety Business Alert Gateway” can be used by the companies. It replaces the old “GPSD [Business Application](#)” tool.

Analysis of the activities related to the Rapid Alert System

What were the most significant developments in 2017?

The Rapid Alert System for non-food, dangerous products has registered a fairly stable number of alerts over the last few years. In 2017, the number of notifications of consumer products posing a risk to health and safety was 2,201, a slight increase compared with last year, when it was 2,044. A total of 3 952 follow-up measures were recorded. Last year these amounted to 4,015 (values including all risks and professional products).

Which EU countries sent the most alerts?

In 2017, all participating countries, except Liechtenstein, notified measures taken against unsafe products. The 3 countries which submitted the most alerts were:

Germany	16%	(354 alerts)
Spain	10%	(222 alerts)
France	9%	(191 alerts)

What does it show when a country sends many notifications – is that there are more dangerous products on that particular market?

The number of notifications sent by a particular Member State to the Rapid Alert System cannot be directly linked to the level of safety of the products on its market. There may be many reasons why some Member States send more alerts than others: large market, large import volumes, experienced inspectors, etc. In general, the European countries which have the biggest markets and the greatest number of imported goods, and which also have the highest number of inspectors, find more unsafe goods and thus send alerts through the Rapid Alert System more often than smaller countries.

What were the main products and risks identified in 2017?

The product categories most often notified were:

Toys	29%	(636 alerts)
Motor vehicles	20%	(436 alerts)
Clothing, textiles and fashion items	12%	(258 alerts)
Electrical appliances and equipment	6%	(145 alerts

Childcare articles and equipment 5% (109 alerts)

This distribution also shows a relatively stable pattern of product categories for which notifications have been made compared to the previous years.

This similar and recurring pattern can be explained by the high volume of consumption/supply of the above five categories (e.g. electrical appliances include mobile phones, laptops, extension leads, battery chargers), and this increases the chances of finding unsafe products.

The five most frequently notified risk categories were:

Injuries	28 %	(682 alerts)
Chemical	22 %	(544 alerts)
Choking	17 %	(410 alerts)
Electric shock	10 %	(253 alerts)
Fire	6 %	(148 alerts)

Where did the largest amount of unsafe products originate from in 2017?

The majority of unsafe products notified in the system came from outside the EU. China (including Hong Kong) was the country of origin in 53% (1167) of alerts, the same percentage as that registered last year.

Unsafe products of European origin accounted for 574 alerts (26%), up from 23% in 2016.

Why are alerts concerning products with European origin increasing?

The percentage of alerts concerning Chinese products has stabilized since last year. However, alerts concerning motor vehicles have increased since last year, which has had a strong impact on the statistics. More alerts of motor vehicles means the risks linked to this category (injuries, fire) form a larger part of the total number of alerts and the share of countries producing these motor vehicles occupy a larger part compared to other countries. Most of such motor vehicles were of European origin.

How does the Commission cooperate with China on product safety issues?

The European Commission has an established, regular cooperation with the Chinese authorities on product safety issues. This includes, since 2006, a systematic exchange with the Chinese authorities, through a specific IT module called "RAPEX-China", on information related to alerts concerning unsafe products of Chinese origin detected by EU Member States. The Chinese authorities investigate the information received and the results and follow-up actions taken in China are reported back to the European Commission.

In the framework of the regular political dialogue with China, Commissioner Jourova met with her Chinese and US counterparts at the Trilateral Product Safety Summit in Beijing in 2017 to reinforce cooperation on product safety matters, with particular emphasis on the safety of products sold online.

For more information: