

NHS WALES
Estates and
Facilities Alert



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Date: 26th January 2015

Cathays Park, Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Parc Cathays, Caerdydd
CF10 3NQ

Window blinds with looped cords or chains. All types

**To: Chief Executives, LHBs
Chief Executives, NHS Trusts
NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership - Contractor Services**

A list of people who need to have early sight of this information is given in the Alert

The content of Estates and Facilities Alerts is agreed between staff representatives from the four NHS administrations and issued throughout the United Kingdom. The Alert is endorsed by the Welsh Government as being relevant to NHS Wales and is issued by:

Neil Davies, Director, Specialist Estates Services, NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

For advice see details on the alert

Contact point in Wales:

**Nigel Davies
Assistant Director
NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates Services
4th Floor, Companies House
Crown Way
Cardiff CF14 3UB**

**Tel: 029 2090 4088
E-mail: Nigel.Davies4@wales.nhs.uk**

Alerts are available in full text at:

<http://nww2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/Contacts.nsf/EmailPublicPage?openpage>

Estates and Facilities Alert



Department
of Health



Health Facilities Scotland



Department of
Health, Social Services
and Public Safety

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk



Partneriaeth
Cydwasaethau
Shared Services
Partnership

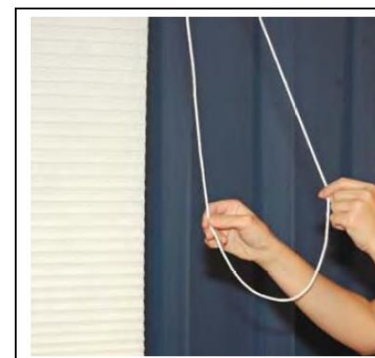
Action

Ref:EFA/2015/001

Issued: 26 Jan 2015

Device

Window blinds with looped cords or chains.
All types.



Problem

Looped cords and chains on window blinds continue to present a strangulation hazard to children and vulnerable adults.

There have been a number of deaths associated with these types of blind cords throughout the UK despite an on-going campaign of awareness.

This alert provides new information on the procurement of blinds and updates the information previously contained in EFA/2010/007.

Action

- If you have premises where children under the age of 42 months are present or likely to have access, you **must** only install blinds which are compliant with the child safety requirements of BS EN 13120:2009+A1:2014.
- Further Actions given on page 2.

Action by

Risk managers, staff and contractors involved in the specification, installation, maintenance or risk assessment of window blind systems. The suggested onward distribution list should be noted.

Contact

Further advice may be obtained from the British Blind and Shutter Association (BBSA).

BBSA website: www.makeitsafe.org.uk

Problem

1. In early 2014 the standards regarding the manufacture, supply and professional installation of internal window blinds changed significantly. It is now illegal to supply or professionally install an internal window blind which does not comply with the child safety requirements of BS EN 13120:2009+A1:2014. Although the law has changed it is estimated that there could be up to 100 million blinds installed prior to this and fatalities in domestic settings continue to be reported involving children and looped blind cords / chains.
2. In May 2009, following a Fatal Accident Inquiry in Scotland into the death of 2½ year old Muireann McLaughlin, Sheriff David Mackie made the following statements in his determination:

“It was the pathologist’s chilling evidence that death in such circumstances can occur in a matter of 15 to 20 seconds or a little longer.”

“The means of avoiding or minimising the risk associated with free hanging looped blind cords [are] known and understood. They are, in the main, simple and cheap.”

When a child becomes entangled or suspended by the neck in a looped cord, death or serious injury can occur quickly. This is particularly true for children under 4 years old.

3. Since 1990 the incidence of deaths of children, mainly under 4 years of age, by strangulation associated with blind cords has been approximately one per year, primarily within a domestic environment.

Action

4. If you have premises where children under the age of 42 months are present or likely to have access, you **must** only install blinds which are compliant with the child safety requirements of BS EN 13120:2009+A1:2014.
5. Given the extremely short period of time in which a child can suffer injury or death, it would be unwise of healthcare establishments to rely solely on supervision of children by parents or staff. Therefore you should also consider applying the same blind safety standard to areas that have children over 42 months with learning and physical difficulties. Note - these measures may not present suitable protection against self-harm, which may need to be considered separately. .
6. If not already documented as part of EFA/2010/007 a risk assessment should be carried out on all existing looped blind cords and chains, where children and vulnerable adults are likely to have access. All blind cords and chains deemed to be potentially hazardous should be modified or secured out of their reach. The BBSA leaflet accompanying this Alert provide options for reducing associated risks and should provide a valuable resource in managing this risk.
7. Organisations should consider making the BBSA leaflet available in public waiting areas to raise the awareness of the potential risk in the domestic setting. The BBSA leaflet has been translated into a limited number of different languages; copies of which can be downloaded from [here](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/make-it-safe-2014-legal-requirements-internal-window-blinds). <http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/make-it-safe-2014-legal-requirements-internal-window-blinds>.
8. Best practice requires healthcare organisations to take a holistic approach and conduct regular risk assessment of the environment for patients who are at risk and should update the assessment criteria in the light of any new information. Where the users of the premises are children or vulnerable adults, there is a greater duty of care to ensure their safety.
9. Report all incidents of this nature to your relevant contact point, given below.

Suggested Onward Distribution

- Directors with responsibility for patient safety
- Directors of Estates & Facilities
- Directors of Nursing
- Medical Directors
- Risk Manager
- Health & Safety Managers
- Care Quality Commission
- Care provider representative bodies
- GP's
- Dentists

Additional information for Wales

The above sections of this Alert were compiled by the Department of Health in Northern Ireland and distributed nationally without modification.

Action required by this alert should be **underway by: 1 February 2015**

Action required by this alert should be **completed by: 31 March 2015**

This Alert updates and replaces the advice given in EFA/2010/007

Enquires should quote reference number EFA/2015/001 and be addressed in Wales to:

Nigel Davies

Assistant Director

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates Services

4th Floor, Companies House

Crown Way

Cardiff CF14 3UB

Tel: 029 2090 4088

E-mail: Nigel.Davies4@wales.nhs.uk

Alerts are available in full text at:

<http://nww2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/Contacts.nsf/EmailPublicPage?openpage>

© Crown Copyright 2015

Addressees may take copies for distribution within their own organisations



TM

**make it
safe**

BBSA®
BRITISH BLIND & SHUTTER ASSOCIATION



2014 legal requirements for internal window blinds

**What to look for in new blinds and how to make
existing blinds safer - this leaflet will tell you how**

What to look for in your new blinds

Blinds come in an endless range of colours and finishes but when buying new blinds for your home, you must consider the way they are operated.

Safe by design >

A blind which is safe by design is one that is cordless or has concealed or tensioned cords.

Typically these blinds are pushed or pulled into position.

Motorised blinds also remove the need for operating cords. Wooden shutters and external blinds are other cordless styles of window dressing.



Wand operated vertical blinds - pushed and pulled into position by the wand which when twisted tilts the louvers



Spring operated roller blind - some styles operate with a decelerator so the blind retracts at a constant, gentle speed



Tensioned pleated blind - all cords are held under tension and the blind is just pushed or pulled into position



On this venetian blind the slats are tilted and the blind raised or lowered with the wand on the right of the blind

In-built safety systems >

In-built safety systems are those that are built into the product and so do not require additional installation or operation in use.

Some window sizes or shapes may not lend themselves to cordless window blinds or you may specifically wish to co-ordinate with your existing blinds. If this is the case then choose a blind style with an in-built safety device, such as a chain break connector where the chain is designed to separate under any undue pressure. Breakaway tassels at the bottom of cords work in the same way.

Note: By law there are limitations on cord and chain lengths for in-built safety systems.



Chain break connector will part under any undue load but after inspection can be clipped back together again



A breakaway device on the cords of a roman blind. The blind raises and lowers normally but cords will separate under undue loads

Separate safety systems >

Separate safety systems are those that require additional installation and/or operation in use.

If cordless options or those with in-built safety devices are not suitable for your specific situation then the only alternative is to use a blind with a separate safety device such as a tensioning system or an accumulation device like a cleat. Make sure the device is securely fitted and always used.

Note: By law there are limitations on cord and chain lengths for separate safety systems.



Cord and chain tensioner for vertical blinds to hold cord and chain taut



Chain tensioner to hold a single chain or cord taut

Making your existing blinds safer

If you have a window blind which has an operating cord or chain that could form a loop you must keep it out of the reach of babies and young children. There are a range of safety devices available for every type of blind.



Chain-break connector

These will break apart when undue pressure is applied on the operating chain but, after inspection, can be reconnected again. Chain sizes vary so you **must** use the chain-break connector which is designed to be used with your specific chain.



Cord/Chain tidys & tensioners

These devices should be securely fixed to an adjacent surface and at the maximum distance from the top of the blind so the cords and/or chains are held permanently taut by the device.



Cleat

This should be securely fixed to an adjacent surface out of the reach of children and at least 1.5 metres from the floor. The cord must be secured as shown after each and every operation of the blind.

Young children can be strangled by loops in pull cords, chains, tapes and inner cords that operate the product. To avoid strangulation and entanglement, keep cords out of the reach of young children. Cords may become wrapped around a child's neck.

Move beds, cots, highchairs and playpens away from window covering cords and chains.



Make sure all cords and chains are always secured out of reach of babies and young children. Do not tie cords or chains together. Make sure cords or chains do not twist and create a loop.



Move furniture away from window covering cords and chains as children love to climb.

By Law: All internal blinds sold **must** comply with the 2014 standards

By Law: Professional installers **must** fit compliant (safe) blinds in **all** homes

“Make it Safe”

says Mum of three, Rachael Maynard

“My daughter, Megan, became entangled in a window blind chain in her bedroom when she was two and a half years old. She spent four days in hospital on a life support machine before we knew she was going to recover. Something as simple as an unrestrained window blind cord or chain can present a real danger to young children but with awareness and by taking some simple actions, any hazard can be eliminated.

Make sure you always Make it Safe.”



It's the law

In early 2014 the standards regarding the manufacture, supply and professional installation of internal window blinds changed significantly. It is now illegal to supply or professionally install an internal window blind which does not comply with the child safety requirements of BS EN 13120:2009+A1:2014

Blinds that are ‘safe by design’ are deemed to be fully compliant with this new standard.

Don't leave things to chance - Get expert advice

An accredited BBSA member or Make it Safe dealer can provide you with expert advice. They will be able to show you the safety features on new blinds and can help you make your existing blinds safer. Just visit www.makeitsafe.org.uk to find an approved expert nearest to you. If you are installing your own blinds or fitting your own safety devices make sure you follow all instructions provided by the supplier.

Mandatory requirements:

The new standard aims to protect babies and small children by:

- ✓ Installation of child safe blinds to ALL HOMES whether children are present or not
- ✓ Limitations on cord and chain lengths
- ✓ Safety devices for preventing any cords or chains from creating a hazardous loop
- ✓ The fitting of safety devices on cords and chains at the point of manufacture
- ✓ The testing of all safety critical components of internal blinds
- ✓ Safety warnings and product instructions

Any professional installer of internal blinds must fit safety devices - by law



The British Blind and Shutter Association

The BBSA is the UK's only trade association representing companies that manufacture, supply and install interior and exterior blinds, awnings, security grilles and shutters. The BBSA launched the Make it Safe campaign in 2009 and has campaigned for safer blinds so welcomes mandatory standards for internal window blinds. To see more about the BBSA's Make it Safe campaign visit:

www.makeitsafe.org.uk

Advice in this brochure and the Make it Safe campaign is supported by:

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

RoSPA's mission is to save lives and reduce injuries in all areas of life and has achieved significant changes through its campaigning work over the 90 years since its inception.

www.rospa.com



Child Accident Prevention Trust

A leading UK charity working to reduce the number of children and young people killed, disabled or seriously injured in accidents.

www.capt.org.uk



British Blind and Shutter Association

PO Box 232, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 9AR

E: info@bbsa.org.uk W: www.bbsa.org.uk

**See the window blind safety video at:
www.makeitsafe.org.uk**

This leaflet is intended only to give general and preliminary guidance and is for information purposes only. It does not, and is not intended to, give professional or technical advice. The reader should always seek specific advice from a professional. The BBSA accepts no liability in contract or tort, and is not responsible for any loss (howsoever caused), and whether arising directly or indirectly, as a result of any action taken based upon the information contained in this leaflet.

03/14 ©BBSA 2014