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Location: Franciscan Hospital For Children  
Chamberlain Conference Room  
30 Warren Street  
Brighton, MA

## **W.A.T.C.H. Reveals Nominees for “10 Worst Toys” For 2015 Holiday Season**

*43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report Urges Parents to Beware of the Dangers  
Associated with Online Purchases of Potentially Harmful Toys*

(Boston, MA—Nov. 18, 2015) **World Against Toys Causing Harm, Inc. (W.A.T.C.H.)** today revealed its nominees for the “**10 Worst Toys of 2015**” and demonstrated the reason “Jurassic World Velociraptor Claws,” and other potentially hazardous toys, should not be in the hands of children.

**With 46 percent of purchases this holiday season expected to be made via the Internet, W.A.T.C.H. is urging parents and caregivers to take extra precautions when buying toys online.**

This year’s toy report, announced by Consumer Advocates **Joan E. Siff**, President of W.A.T.C.H., and **James A. Swartz**, a nationally known trial attorney and Director of W.A.T.C.H., demonstrated the types of toy hazards available online and in retail stores that parents should watch-out for. **Siff and Swartz also provided up-to-date information about toy recalls and stressed the necessity for vigilance during holiday shopping:**

### **DANGEROUS TOYS: SERIOUS BUSINESS**

For over four decades, W.A.T.C.H. has discussed the issue of dangerous toys in the hope of bringing about change and reducing injuries to children. Although parents have a right to expect that toys they give to their children are safe, unsafe toys remain an ongoing problem. One child is treated in a U.S. emergency room every three minutes for a toy-related injury. From 1990 to 2011, there was a 40% increase in toy-related injuries. **Consumers can help children enjoy a safer holiday season knowing what traps to avoid when selecting toys. W.A.T.C.H.’s “10 Worst Toys” list, a hands-on tool for consumers, raises awareness of the different types of potential hazards to avoid while toy shopping.**

## **TOYS FOR SALE ON THE INTERNET: SAFETY TRAPS AND TIPS**

**A focus of this year's conference is the safety hazards to watch out for when buying toys online.** The convenience of online shopping can make a hectic holiday season more manageable: no lines, no travel, and no hassle. The upward trend of e-retail sales growing exponentially is no secret; more people are buying online and more retailers are selling online. In this millennium, nearly two-thirds of retail sales growth has occurred online, a greater number of retailers are increasing their Internet presence to supplement physical store sales, and soon social networks will commonly serve as shopping platforms. Especially when shopping for children's products online, **don't compromise safety for convenience.** Parents and caregivers will be able to make more informed decisions if they avoid the impulse purchase and do their due diligence. Many toy shoppers may not be getting complete information when buying toys online so they may not know hazards of a purchase at the time of sale. **In a year when about 46% of consumers plan to purchase holiday gifts online, we urge parents to look discerningly in their virtual 'shopping carts' and know what safety traps to avoid:**

***Limited product information online:*** Not restricted by bricks and mortar and, in many cases, regulations, consumers buying toys on the Internet are already at a disadvantage as they are unable to touch and physically inspect a toy and its packaging at the time of sale for more obvious hazards. As a result, once the toy is obtained, parents should thoroughly inspect the toy and its packaging prior to putting it into the hands of a child. Caregivers should not be lulled into a false sense of security that a toy is safe because of a familiar brand name on a package.

***Inconsistent Warnings and Age Recommendations:*** Some toys available for purchase online may have retailer warnings and age recommendations that are inconsistent with those supplied by manufacturers. In some cases, the warnings may be omitted from the Internet description completely. Such omissions and inconsistencies regarding important safety information can lead to misinformed, and potentially dangerous, consumer purchases.

***Recycled Toys- Internet Buyers Beware:*** As toy themes popular in the 70's and 80's are reappearing, such as "Star Wars" and "Jurassic park" inspired figurines, toys manufactured in past decades are in greater demand today. The Internet, an ever-growing frontier of "second-hand" toy buying opportunities, is largely devoid of regulations, safety protocols, and checks and balances. Consumer-to-consumer sales on e-commerce sites such as Craig's list and eBay are often inconsistently monitored, if monitored at all. Parents need to inspect these toy purchases for dangerous hazards and stay away from any toys that may have been recalled, caused injuries, or are defective.

## **CLASSIC TOY HAZARDS: WATCH OUT**

Whether shopping in a retailer's store or on their website, awareness of classic hidden toy hazards can prevent injuries. **Shockingly, classic toy dangers, such as small parts, strings, projectiles, toxic substances, rigid materials, and inaccurate warnings and labels, resurface each year in newly designed toys.** In the last twelve months, there have been at least sixteen (16) toy recalls representing over three million (3,000,000) units of toys with recognized safety defects in the United States and Canada proving the **inadequacy of existing standards.** In 2013, there were over 250,000 toy-related injuries and 50 children died in toy-related incidents between 2010 and 2013. **Although even one injury to one child is too many, particularly when the injury is preventable, recent statistics emphasize that dangerous toys continue to pose a year-round threat.** The ten (10) toy recalls due to choking and/or ingestion risks, issued by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in the preceding twelve months, highlight the continued problem of small and ingestible parts reaching children. Recently "Build-A-Bear" recalled 34,600 stuffed animals because a seam could open exposing its stuffing and posing a choking hazard for young children. **The recurrence of many known hazards in toys in the past year, are clearly suggestive of a broken system that needs fixing before more children are harmed.**

## **FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE - SAFE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE**

**The best weapon in the fight to prevent injuries to children continues to be safely designed and manufactured products.** While recalls are an important safety measure, they are only a band-aid for the larger issue: dangerous toys shouldn't reach the hands of consumers in the first place. **Recalls are reactive, not proactive.** Unfortunately, many consumers never receive notice of toy recalls and may not know that a dangerous toy sits like a time bomb in their child's toy box. Many of the toys recalled in the last year not only put children at risk of serious injury or death, but also are **evidence of substandard manufacturing practices and inadequate premarket testing.** Moreover, some toys that are in compliance with current industry or regulatory standards have proven to be hazardous demonstrating the inadequacy of existing standards.

With the unique considerations of online shopping- few monitoring systems, virtually no limitations to e-inventory supply, and access literally at our fingertips - it is more important than ever to stop dangerous toys at their source before they are available for sale. The burden must be on manufacturers and retailers, not consumers, to identify the known hazards before their products enter the channels of commerce. **There is no excuse for manufacturing, importing and distributing a toy that can kill a child since toys are embellishments of life, not necessities.** The problem of realistic looking toy guns is one of the hazards that W.A.T.C.H. has frequently addressed, most recently at its 2014 Worst Toy Conference and its 2015 Summer Safety Conference. There have been tragic consequences when toy guns are mistaken for real weapons by law enforcement officers. **Boston Mayor Marty Walsh** took an important step in raising awareness about dangerous toys last week when he signed an ordinance to increase public safety by banning realistic looking replica guns in public. **The key message today is to let caregivers know that while there are dangerous toys being sold in retail stores and online, awareness this holiday season and year-round can truly save lives.**

#### **W.A.T.C.H.'s 2015 "10 WORST TOYS" LIST**

**There remains an alarming number of dangerous toys on store shelves, in catalogues, and on e-retailers' websites.** In a toy industry generating approximately \$22 billion dollars in sales a year in the United States alone, safety concerns must be a priority, not an afterthought. **The particular toys on the "10 Worst Toys" list are illustrative of some hazards in toys being sold to consumers, and should not be considered as the only potentially hazardous toys on the market:**

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#### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS:**

**Joan E. Siff**, President of W.A.T.C.H., began presenting the "Ten Worst Toys" list with Attorney Edward M. Swartz (1934-2010) on behalf of W.A.T.C.H. in 1991. She earned her J.D. and Masters in Mass Communication from Boston University. After serving as an Assistant District Attorney in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Norfolk County, Ms. Siff practiced product liability litigation. Ms. Siff is admitted to the bars in Massachusetts, New York and the District of Columbia. Ms. Siff is the author of "Toy Regulation Still Lagging in Protecting Children," published in the Leader's Product Liability, Law and Strategy. She has given numerous lectures on behalf of W.A.T.C.H. to increase awareness about unsafe children's products. Joan Siff has appeared on Fox and Friends, Fox News Live, LawLive (FATV), CNN Radio Atlanta, NECN, The Michael Smerconish Morning Drive Radio Program (Philadelphia). She has served on several non-profit boards relating to children's causes and is currently a Board Member of Franciscan Hospital for Children.

**James A. Swartz** is a nationally known trial attorney, consumer advocate, and a Director of W.A.T.C.H. His law practice at Swartz & Swartz includes many well-known cases involving product liability injuries. Attorney Swartz has authored book chapters relating to child and product safety, including "Hazardous Playthings Causing Injury to Children," Children and Injuries (Lawyers & Judges Pub. Co., Inc.); and "The Common Law in the New Millennium- Protecting Our Children," Civil Trial Practice-Winning Techniques of Successful Trial Attorneys, (Lawyers & Judges Pub. Co., Inc.), as well as numerous articles. Mr. Swartz earned his J.D. at Georgetown University Law Center. He is a member of Trial Lawyers for Public Justice, serving as Massachusetts State Coordinator; The Massachusetts Bar Association; The Massachusetts Academy of Trial Attorneys; The American Bar Association; and The Boston Bar Association, among many other associations. James Swartz has appeared on such national television programs including as "Take It Personally" on CNN, "Newsfront" on MSNBC, "Legal Cafe" on COURT TV, "Crook and Chase" on the Nashville Network (TNN), interview on BLOOMBERG BUSINESS NEWS television network, and in news reports on CNN, and other national news networks.

**"BUD" SKIPIT'S WHEELY CUTE PULL ALONG**



<b>Price:</b>	<b>\$29.99</b>
<b>Manufacturer or Distributor:</b>	<b>Bunnies By The Bay</b>
<b>Retailer(s):</b>	<b>Amazon.com, Ebay, Bunniesbythebay.com</b>
<b>Age Recommendation:</b>	<b>"babies 6 months and older"</b>
<b>Warnings:</b>	<b>None</b>

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR CHOKING INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** This soft, plush puppy pull toy is marketed for infants as a "friend" who is "ready to roll." The furry pet rests on two sets of red wooden wheels with blue hub caps. On June 16, 2015, certain lots of these toys were recalled because the hub caps "can break or come off at the wheel, posing a choking hazard for young children." After issuance of the recall, a similar toy, purchased online, exhibited the same potential for the "choking hazard" identified in the government's recall notice.

**FOAM DART GUN**



**Price:** \$13.99  
**Manufacturer or Distributor:** GD.Jiefeng Toys  
**Retailer(s):** Amazon.com, Ebay  
**Age Recommendation:** "For Ages 3 & Up"  
**Warnings:** "WARNING: Do not aim at eyes or face. TO AVOID INJURY: Do not modify darts", and other warnings (package only)

***HAZARD: REALISTIC TOY WEAPONRY!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** In today's world, there is no excuse for outfitting children with realistic toy weapons designed to produce potentially dangerous and unnecessary thrills. Existing regulations addressing the hazards associated with such "toys" are inadequate. Detailed replicas have resulted in a number of deaths through the years and should never be sold as toys.

**STATS 38" QUICK FOLDING TRAMPOLINE**



**Price:** \$49.99  
**Manufacturer or Distributor:** Toys R Us, Inc.  
**Retailer(s):** Toys R Us, Ebay  
**Age Recommendation:** "6+"  
**Warnings:** "CAUTION: Performing any physical activity presents a risk of injury. Adult supervision required" (packaging), and other warnings/cautions on packaging and packaging insert

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR HEAD, NECK AND OTHER BODILY INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** This trampoline is sold in the toy aisle for children as young as 6-years-old.

Remarkably, the package insert cautions, in part, as follows:

"Landing on the head or neck can cause serious injury, paralysis, or death, even when landing in the middle of the bed."

Further, despite an instruction that the product be used "only with adult supervision," a photo on the packaging shows a child bouncing alone. The many hazards associated with trampoline use should make it apparent to manufacturers and retailers that such equipment should not be sold as a playtime activity for young children.

**POO-DOUGH**



**Price:** \$4.99  
**Manufacturer or Distributor:** Skyrocket Toys LLC  
**Retailer(s):** Kmart, Amazon.com, Walmart, Toys R Us  
**Age Recommendation:** "3+"  
**Warnings:** "ALLERGY NOTICE: CONTAINS WHEAT"  
(package only)

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR ALLERGY-RELATED INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** It is difficult to envision the play value of a "toy" inviting children to "[m]ake your own poo!" so that it "[l]ooks like the real thing!" The product, which consists of a "poo mold" and three cans of brown "Poo-Dough compound," contains an "allergy notice" on the throw-away packaging that the dough contains wheat. Allergic reactions to wheat include symptoms ranging from hives, headaches and difficulty breathing, to life-threatening anaphylaxis.

**SPLAT X SMACK SHOT**



**Price:** \$10.00  
**Manufacturer or Distributor:** Imperial Toy LLC  
**Retailer(s):** Walmart, Amazon.com, Kmart  
**Age Recommendation:** "Ages 8+"  
**Warnings:** "WARNING: Do not aim or shoot at people or animals"; "Launcher should never be aimed at eyes, face, people or animals"; "Anyone within close distance...should be alerted prior to firing..."; and other warnings

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR EYE INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** The "Smack Shot" is similar to a slingshot, and is sold with ammunition capable of firing "up to 100ft!" The many warnings and cautions include "alerting" anyone within "close distance to the intended target...."



**KICK FLIPPER**



**Price:** \$19.99  
**Manufacturer or Distributor:** Playsmart Inc.  
**Retailer(s):** Amazon.com, Learning Express  
**Age Recommendation:** "5+"  
**Warnings:** "CAUTION – Do not use on stairs, hills, or inclines",  
and other cautions

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR HEAD AND IMPACT INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** The "Kick Flipper" is a rigid plastic board marketed to children "[l]ike a skateboard without wheels!" Young users are encouraged to "[l]earn tricks" and "Kick it! Flip it! Pop it!" The manufacturer makes no mention of safety gear, and the children pictured on the packaging are not wearing helmets or other protection.

**LEONARDO'S ELECTRONIC STEALTH SWORD**



<b>Price:</b>	<b>\$24.99</b>
<b>Manufacturer or Distributor:</b>	<b>Playmates International Company Ltd.</b>
<b>Retailer(s):</b>	<b>Toys R Us, Amazon.com, Ebay</b>
<b>Age Recommendation:</b>	<b>"Ages 4 and up"</b>
<b>Warnings:</b>	<b>"WARNING. Not suitable for children under 3 years. Small parts"</b>

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR BLUNT FORCE INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** Young children are encouraged to engage in a "Ninja Battle" with this rigid, plastic sword associated with a well-known Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles character. The blade has the potential to cause facial or other impact injuries.

**KID CONNECTION DOCTOR PLAY SET**



<b>Price:</b>	<b>\$4.97</b>
<b>Manufacturer or Distributor:</b>	<b>Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.</b>
<b>Retailer(s):</b>	<b>Walmart, Amazon.com, Ebay</b>
<b>Age Recommendation:</b>	<b>"2+"</b>
<b>Warnings:</b>	<b>None</b>

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR INGESTION AND CHOKING INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** This multi-colored play set, sold for oral-age children, includes “[e]verything you need to play doctor!” Among the medical devices included is a thin plastic “tongue depressor” measuring approximately 4¾ inches in length. Small children are effectively invited to introduce this implement into their mouths, presenting the potential to occlude the airway.

**PULL ALONG ZEBRA**



**Price:** \$20.99  
**Manufacturer or Distributor:** Early Learning Centre  
**Retailer(s):** Amazon.com, Kmart, Brookstone, Village Toy Shop  
**Age Recommendation:** "12-36 months"  
**Warnings:** "WARNING – Remember babies and young children have no idea what is dangerous or potentially harmful, so supervision is important...."

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR STRANGULATION AND ENTANGLEMENT INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** Despite the industry's standard requiring strings on playpen and crib toys to be less than 12 inches in length, manufacturers are permitted to market "pull toys" like the "Pull Along Zebra", with a cord measuring approximately 21 inches. The toy is intended for babies as young as 12 months old.

**JURASSIC WORLD VELOCIRAPTOR CLAWS**



**Price:** \$19.99  
**Manufacturer or Distributor:** Hasbro  
**Retailer(s):** Target, Amazon.com, Toys R Us, Walmart, Kohl's  
**Age Recommendation:** "Age 4+"  
**Warnings:** "WARNING: CHOKING HAZARD – Small parts will be generated. Not for children under 3 years"

***HAZARD: POTENTIAL FOR EYE AND FACIAL INJURIES!***

***W.A.T.C.H. OUT!*** These oversized claws, based on images and characters from the popular Jurassic World franchise, are sold to enable 4-year-olds to "claw like a raptor!" No warnings or cautions are provided regarding the potential for eye and facial injuries.