



13 July 2011

Media Release: NTE/15/2011

SPRING joins hands with CASE, retailers and suppliers to ensure safer toys

1. SPRING Singapore is setting up a joint working group to look into ways to further improve the safety of toys in Singapore. The working group comprises representatives from SPRING, Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE), Singapore Toys & Confectionery Dealers' Association, Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore and Singapore Retailers Association. The working group will coordinate a multi-pronged approach to raise awareness and educate businesses and consumers, as well as to propose further measures to enhance toy safety.
2. The latest move is part of the actions that SPRING is taking to make toys sold in Singapore safer. On 1 April 2011, SPRING was appointed as the Safety Authority in charge of the new Consumer Protection (Consumer Goods Safety Requirements) Regulations (CGSR). Under the regulations, general consumer goods, including toys, sold in Singapore must conform to applicable international, national or regional safety standards. If a product is found to be unsafe, SPRING has the power to order the supplier to stop the sale and notify consumers of the unsafe product. Failure to comply with SPRING's directive can result in a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment of up to two years, or both.

3. Over the last three months, SPRING has conducted some 50 spot checks on stores selling toys. They include department stores, supermarkets and shops in the HDB heartlands across the island. Tests were conducted on 200 samples of toys covering various categories and price ranges. The toys were tested for physical and mechanical safety, and for chemical contents to check that phthalates¹ and lead² are within safe limits.
4. Following the tests, SPRING issued 47 stop-sale notices to the retailers whose toys were found to be unsafe. SPRING also met the importers, wholesalers and retailers to educate them on the CGSR regulations and what they should do to ensure that their products meet the applicable safety standards. The suppliers and retailers have cooperated with SPRING and have removed all the unsafe toys promptly.
5. Public education is another key strategy to raise awareness among businesses and consumers. SPRING has produced brochures on the CGSR regulations and toy safety. So far, 60,000 copies have been distributed to the public. Advertisements are also placed regularly in the major newspapers and articles published in magazines such as *Lifestyle* and *Motherhood*. In addition, SPRING and CASE have organised public awareness seminars. About 400 businesses and consumers participated in the seminars. SPRING also attended to some 150 enquiries on its CGSR hotline.
6. SPRING's Deputy Chief Executive, Mr Tan Kai Hoe said, "As the Safety Authority, SPRING takes a serious view of any non-compliance and will take the necessary measures to improve the safety of consumer goods. We are encouraged that there was some improvement in the test results since the CGSR came into effect. We are also heartened to note that the retailers and suppliers have taken immediate action

¹ Phthalates are believed to affect the human reproductive system and cause immunity problems, among others.

² According to medical literature, the health implications of ingesting excessive lead over time include learning disabilities and behavioural problems, among others.

to remove the unsafe toys from the shelves and have cooperated fully with the investigations.

7. "While the industry players have been supportive and committed, toy safety is actually quite a complex issue. Our market is small and open, so the supply chains can be diverse and complicated. New products, new technologies, or new findings about the health or environmental hazards of some existing products or materials, mean that some unsafe products could still find their way into the market, no matter how tight the regulations, how stringent the checks, how punitive the penalties or how rigorous the quality control. What's important is for us to be constantly on the lookout as new risks are identified and be able to respond swiftly to them.
8. We, therefore, need the support and cooperation of all stakeholders to effectively deal with the evolving risks. That is the purpose of the joint working group -- it will enable us to better reach out to the various stakeholders to raise their awareness and knowledge levels, as well as work on specific issues such as procurement policies and response plans," Mr Tan added.
9. CASE, the consumer watchdog body, is actively supporting SPRING in the quest for safer toys in Singapore. Indeed, it was the two rounds of toy safety checks by CASE which highlighted the need for more to be done to improve toy safety. Of the 50 toys tested last year, 24 had failed the safety tests. A second check in February this year on a different set of 50 toys found 23 failures. The results of the latest tests done on 200 toys in June/July by SPRING show a significant improvement. Overall, the percentage of toys which failed the tests has declined by more than half.
10. President of CASE, Mr Yeo Guat Kwang said, "While the regulations are now in place and businesses are taking action to comply with the safety requirements, there is no guarantee of zero risk. Consumers have to take charge of their own safety as well. Parents are advised to purchase only well-made toys with proper labelling, including age grade warning, safety compliance labelling, instructional literature and

manufacturer/ distributor information. They should also look out for safety alerts and report to CASE or SPRING about any products they suspect are unsafe.”

11. President of the Singapore Toys & Confectionery Dealers’ Association, Mr Lim Cheng Eng, said, “Before the CGSR regulations were introduced, awareness of toy safety in the market was not so high. When the CGSR came into effect, SPRING and CASE organised public seminars and held dialogues with toy importers, distributors and retailers to explain the details of the regulations. Members of our association are committed to comply with the regulations. Those toys which failed the safety tests have been removed and we will make every effort to ensure that the toys we supply are safe. Many importers and distributors now require documentation from manufacturers and overseas suppliers on the toys’ conformance to safety standards.”

12. President of the Federation of Merchants’ Associations, Singapore, Mr Yeo Hiang Meng, said, "As the CGSR came into effect only on 1 April 2011, it is still very new to many small and medium-sized businesses in Singapore. They may not be aware of the broad categories of consumer products covered by the regulations, including toys. Our association will work closely with SPRING Singapore, Singapore Toys & Confectionery Dealers' Association and CASE to create awareness and educate the heartland businesses on the CGSR regulations. We will also advise them to look out for the markings for the applicable safety standard for the products they sell, and to purchase goods from reliable sources, so that they do not unwittingly become suppliers of unsafe products."

13. President of the Singapore Retailers Association, Dato Dr Jannie Chan, said, "We encourage all our members to be signatories of the SRA Code of Practice which, among other things, requires the signatory to adhere to all laws and regulations relating to the sale of goods. This is especially so when it comes to safety. The SRA will, therefore, work with our partners to ensure that our members take the safety of

their customers to heart. It is only when they have earned the trust of their customers that their customers will return to them again and again."

14. Details of the tests and photographs of the toys are available on the websites of SPRING (www.spring.gov.sg) and CASE www.case.org.sg.