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## IAEM calls for a ban on looped blind cords following latest tragedy

The Irish Association for Emergency Medicine supports calls for a ban on blinds with a looped cord system following the recent inquest into the death, in January 2011, of another toddler who was strangled by such a device. We support the Dublin City Coroner, Dr Brian Farrell, who expressed the view that the looped cord system was a dangerous design and advised that it should be modified with the cord separated into two lengths.

Irish Emergency Departments (EDs) have seen emergency attendances of infants and toddlers due to strangulation by the closed loop system. The National Standards Authority of Ireland has adopted the latest European Standard EN 13120 into an Irish Standard, I.S. EN13120. The revised standard specifies stricter requirements on looped mechanism window blinds, requiring that manufacturers provide the means to limit the risk posed by looped cord mechanisms. The manufacturer can limit the risk by either incorporating risk preventions into the design or by supplying an appropriate safety device with the product. In addition, where cords or chains on blinds pose a risk, a warning notice must come with the blind. Due to the recurrent nature of these preventable tragedies, it seems that current European and National standards for internal blinds are insufficient to prevent tragic loss of life. Internationally, the closed loop system has been banned and blinds recalled in the USA, Canada and Australia. In the UK there are campaigns to ban the closed loop system as a result of similar tragedies.

IAEM wishes to remind parents of the importance of following the manufacturer's safety instructions when using the closed loop system for their blinds. There are a number of simple steps that can be immediately taken to remove any potential hazards that looped cord blinds can pose to young children:

- Where an alternative is available, do not purchase a closed loop system;
- Never put a cot, bed, high chair or playpen near a window or patio door where a child can reach a curtain or blind cord;
- Keep sofas, chairs, tables, shelves or bookcases away from windows to prevent children climbing up and reaching curtain or blind cords;
- Cords ending in a loop are particularly risky. Cut the cord to get rid of the loop and install tassels instead;
- Cords should end at least 1.6 metres above the ground so children cannot reach them. Replace cords with curtain or blind wands;
- Where cords cannot be cut, a tie down or tension device can be used to pull the cord tight and secure it to the floor or wall.

The ultimate solution is however a ban on blinds with a looped cord system.

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