CPSC Safety Alert

Freezer, Dryer, Cooler and Refrigerator Entrapment Deaths to Children

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has received reports of numerous suffocation deaths involving children who crawled inside latch type freezers, clothes dryers, combination washer/dryer units, picnic coolers, ice boxes in campers, and old-style latch type refrigerators. Most of the victims were four to seven years old. In all cases, the doors could not be easily pushed open from the inside. In some of the incidents associated with clothes dryers, the appliance was accidentally turned on while the child was inside.

Frequently, the children were playing "hide-and-seek" and the appliance or chest provided a deceptively good place to hide. When the door slammed shut, the tight fitting gasket on most of the appliances cut off air to the child. This, along with the insulated construction of the appliance, also prevented the child's screams from being heard. But abandoned appliances are not the only items involved with accidents like these. Entrapment deaths have been reported in products in use or stored in the kitchen, laundry room, basement, or garage. Deaths also have occurred in ice boxes located in campers parked outside the home.

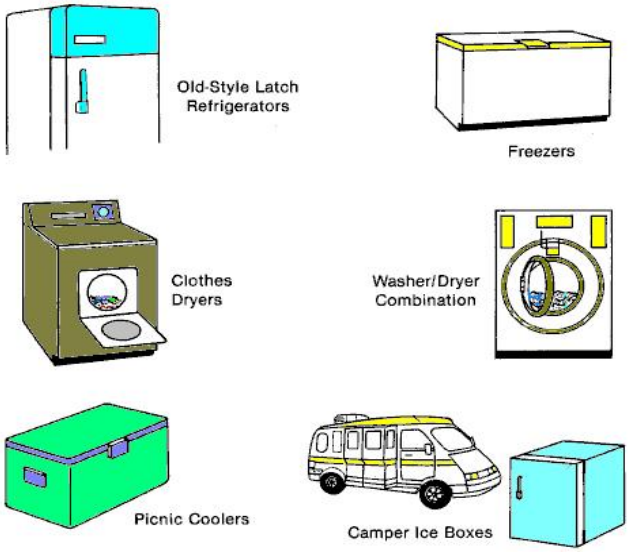
The Federal Refrigerator Safety Act requires that refrigerators be capable of being opened from the inside. However, there may still be some appliances in the home that do not have these safety features.

CPSC recommends that you identify appliances or ice chests in your house, garage or recreational vehicles, which may present an entrapment hazard and:

- Childproof old-style refrigerators and other appliances which are to be discarded or are in storage. The surest method is to take off the door completely and in most cases this is a simple process using a screwdriver. It is unlawful in many local jurisdictions to discard old refrigerators without first removing the door.

- Keep children away from old-style refrigerators, freezers, dryers or coolers still in use. Lock the door to your utility room and warn children not to play inside these appliances.

To report an unsafe product or a product-related injury, visit www.SaferProducts.gov or call our toll-free Hotline at (800) 638-2772.



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