



**For immediate release: December 15, 2010**  
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## **Douglas County Health Department National Safety Council Urge Toy Safety**

The old song mentions that Santa makes his list and checks it twice, but that's also a good idea for parents when they buy toys for their young children, according to the National Safety Council and the Douglas County Health Department.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission in 2007 received 18 reports of toy-related deaths and estimated there were an additional 170,100 hospital emergency-room toy-related injuries to children under 15. Airway obstruction from small toys, drowning or motor vehicle accidents during play accounted for most of the deaths.

Lacerations, contusions and abrasions accounted for most of the injuries, with the head and face the areas of the body most likely to be affected.

"It's easy to get excited about finding the perfect toy at the last minute," said Kay Farrell, president/CEO of the National Safety Council, Greater Omaha Chapter. "Picking a good safe gift is not that simple."

Douglas County Health Director, Dr. Adi Pour, encouraged toy shoppers to take their time.

"I want to encourage everyone who is buying toys for the children in their family to take a little extra time and make sure you select a safe toy that is appropriate for the child's age," Dr. Pour said.

Here are some suggestions from the National Safety Council, Greater Omaha Chapter, and the Douglas County Health Department for selecting safe toys:

- Follow age and safety guidelines on the warning labels and look for well-made toys.
- Use special care when buying for children under age 3 who can choke on small toys and toy parts.
- Balls should be at least 1.75 inches in diameter for children younger than 6 years of age.
- Children have sensitive ears, for if a toy seems too loud for you, it probably is too loud for a child.
- Avoid toys made of PVC plastic. It can contain chemicals that pose developmental hazards.
- Unpainted wooden or cloth toys are a good choice.
- Make toys like bicycles, scooters, skateboards and inline skates safer by adding a helmet, knee pads, elbow pads and wrist guards. You can learn about safe and proper gear at [www.safenebraska.org](http://www.safenebraska.org).
- It is important to stay informed of toy recalls. You can do that by checking [www.recalls.gov](http://www.recalls.gov).

Adults also need to supervise toy use to avoid injury and check toys for damage. For example, if a sharp edge appears, repair the toy or throw it away.

"Few things spread holiday joy like a child receiving the toy they want," Farrell said.

"Our hope is for a safe and happy holiday season," Dr. Pour said.