

CRIB SAFETY

Managing Hospitality Risk

WHAT'S AT RISK?

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that children under age 2 spend more than 7 million nights per year in hotels, motels and resorts. Many traveling families use cribs and play yards provided by motels and hotels.

In 2000, National SAFE KIDS visited 90 hotels and motels in 27 states. Of the cribs inspected, 82 percent had at least one safety hazard, including loose hardware or lack of secured mattress supports that could entrap a baby; soft bedding, including quilts, comforters or pillows that could cause suffocation; and adult-sized sheets that pose a strangulation and suffocation hazard.

Each year, about 40 babies suffocate or strangle in their cribs when they become trapped between broken crib parts or in cribs with older, unsafe designs. Soft bedding such as quilts, comforters or pillows can suffocate a baby. As many as 3,000 infants die each year from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and up to one-third of these may have suffocated on soft bedding. Adult sheets should never be used in a crib because they pose a strangulation and suffocation risk to babies. Hotels and motels should provide fitted crib sheets in good condition that fit the mattress securely.

WHAT ARE YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS?

If you ever face litigation over crib safety, the CPSC standards will be used as the minimum requirements of care for a lodging operator. You and your staff should be aware of those standards, and operate accordingly. CPSC offers the following tips for a safer sleeping environment for babies:



- Common practice requires crib sheets to have a warning label advising: “Prevent suffocation or entanglement. Never use crib sheets unless it fits securely on crib mattress.” Make sure the crib sheet fits snugly on a crib mattress and overlaps the mattress so it cannot be dislodged by pulling on a corner of the sheet.
- Never use an adult sheet on a crib mattress. It can come loose and present an entanglement hazard to young children. Parents should be advised to place a baby on his/her back on a firm, tight-fitting mattress in a crib meeting current safety standards.

HOW CAN YOU BETTER PROTECT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

For some suggestions designed to assist you in developing sound policies and procedures for your organization, please turn this document over and review the attached checklist.

For more information about this and other hospitality risk management topics, please contact:

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Checklist: Crib Safety

- Hotel employees and guests can both put wear and tear on cribs quickly. Hoteliers should establish crib-safety inspection procedures. Maintenance/ Housekeeping should be instructed to make sure all cribs have no missing or broken hardware and slats no more than 2 3/8" apart, no corner posts over 1/16" high, no cutout designs in the headboard or foot board, a firm, tight-fitting mattress and a safety certification seal (on new cribs).
- Instructions for assembly, disassembly and usage should be published in the language of the person charged with the responsibility of conducting those inspections. Supervisors should confirm that inspections have been performed routinely and document the results.
- Never provide a playpen when guests request a crib. A playpen is not a crib. Playpens are constructed with mesh sides. With the fast wear and tear typical of hotel use, the size of the mesh openings quickly can increase from a safe and recommended inch to an opening large enough for a small child to strangle.
- Never provide pillows, comforters, full-size sheets or blankets with a crib, even if the child's parents request it. These items can smother kids. Provide only a crib with a fire-retardant mattress covered by a well-fitted crib sheet.
- Purchase high quality cribs that use hardwoods instead of materials that weaken as they get damp or abused.
- Check standard cribs to see that:
 - Crib has not been recalled (up-to-date recall lists are available at www.cpsc.gov).
 - Slats are 2 3/8 inches (60 mm) apart or less.
 - Slats are not missing, loose, cracked or splintered.
 - Crib has no sharp or jagged edges.
 - Mattress fits tightly into crib (i.e., no more than two fingers fit between the edge of the mattress and the crib side).
 - Mattress support is securely attached to the crib headboard and footboard.
 - Screws or bolts holding crib parts together are tight and none are missing.
 - Corner posts are 1/16 inch (1 1/2 mm) high or less.
 - Crib has no cutouts in the crib headboard or footboard.
 - Drop-side latches are too difficult to be released by a young child.
 - Mattress is covered with a well-fitting crib sheet (never use adult sheets).
 - No pillows, comforters are provided with the crib.
- Check mesh cribs and play yards to see that:
 - Mesh crib/play yard has not been recalled (up-to-date recall lists are available at www.cpsc.gov).
 - Mesh is less than 1/4 inch in size.
 - Mesh has no tears, holes or loose threads.
 - Mesh is securely attached to the top rail and floorplate.
 - Top rail cover has no tears or holes.
 - Mesh crib/play yard has no missing, loose or exposed staples.
 - Mattress/floorpad is covered with a fitted sheet or floorpad cover provided by the manufacturer (never use adult sheets or other crib sheets).
 - No pillows, comforters, or other soft items are provided with the play yard.