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Alert over dangerous cots on the market

By MURIEL LAU

TEN out of 11 cots tested by the Consumer Council were found to be unsafe, with design defects which could kill or injure babies.

The council said the major problems were the space between the vertical bars of the cots, the distance between the mattress base and top edge of the cots, and the height of the dropsides.

Last year, the council received five complaints about cots, some of them involving injuries to children.

In one case, a baby's head got caught between the bars and the child suffocated.

According to British standards, the width between bars at the sides of a cot should not exceed 60 millimetres.

The council's publication steering committee chairman, Mr Anthony Yuen Tak-tim, said: "But in an extreme case, the width can be up to 90 millimetres, which is very dangerous."

The council also warned consumers to make sure the dropsides were high enough to prevent babies from climbing out.

Parents should also make sure that the cot wheels can be easily locked and that mattress bases are fixed securely.

The Principal Assistant Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mr Cheung Po-tak, said yesterday that a report would soon be submitted to the Working Group on Toy Safety for approval. Legislation would then be drafted to govern the safety standard of all products used by children.

"We are likely to have the legislation passed by the end of the year, then a grace period of one year will be given to manufacturers who do not comply with our safety requirements," Mr Cheung said.

The council had earlier contacted manufacturers and importers of the baby cots they tested.

"All of them revealed full willingness to co-operate and promised to make improvements," Mr Yuen said.

In the meantime, consumers can make a better purchase by using a guide in the council's latest Choice magazine.