

Abstract: The Playskool Travel-Lite Crib

The Playskool Travel-Lite, a portable crib manufactured by Kolcraft Enterprises and licensed by Hasbro's Playskool division, came to market in December 1989, stopped shipping in April 1992, and was recalled in February 1993. The crib's recall was initiated after three children were killed, in separate incidents, when one of its top rails collapsed and strangled them. Approximately 11,600 of the cribs were manufactured, and by June 1996, when the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) closed its case, only 2,736 Travel-Lites could be accounted for. To date, six children have been killed in Playskool Travel-Lite cribs.

This case discusses the design, development, marketing, sale, and recall of the Travel-Lite.

Part A discusses how the Travel-Lite came to market, details the deaths of three infants in the product, and brings Sanfred Koltun, CEO of Kolcraft, to a point where he must decide how the company will conduct a recall, as ordered by the CPSC.

Part B details the recall process as it occurred, including negotiations between Kolcraft and the CPSC, and Kolcraft's actions in conducting its recall. It also discusses three additional infant deaths that occurred after the recall.

Part C considers the numerous issues surrounding the succession of the company to Sanfred Koltun's son Thomas and details Travel-Lite deaths that occurred during and after the recall. The case ends with Thomas Koltun facing a major lawsuit, public relations challenges, maneuverings by Hasbro to separate itself from the product's liabilities, and the possibility that Travel-Lites are still in use by the public.

This case study is designed for use in business ethics and organizational behavior courses, as well as in courses treating new product development, brand integrity, governmental regulation, crisis management, succession management, and business law. The narrative of the case provides material for discussing ethically responsible corporate policy and practice. Analysis of the decision-making processes at Kolcraft and Hasbro that ultimately resulted in the tragic deaths provides an opportunity to discuss the many facets of corporate responsibility.

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