Death Spurs Recall Of 220,000 Infant Travel Beds

WASHINGTON (AP) -- A children's safety equipment manufacturer has agreed to recall about 220,000 infant travel beds after reports of one infant's death and nine others entrapped or distressed while inside the portable sleep tents.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission announced the recall in cooperation with KidCo Inc. of Libertyville, Ill., early Friday after determining that an infant could roll between the bed's air mattress and the tent's fabric sides, raising the danger of suffocation.

The Pea Pod Travel Crib has an air mattress that fits into a zippered pocket in the floor of the domed tent, which collapses for easy transport. But if the mattress is placed in the floor of the tent, an infant's head could lodge between the mattress and the tent's side, making breathing impossible.

That's what's believed to have happened to a 5-month-old New York City baby, who was put in the travel crib with his twin sister for a nap while visiting family in December 2011.

"The bed is very compact and easy to fold," said Natalie Diaz, a friend of the family whose baby died. "It looks like a giant Frisbee and pops open. You assume when something's on the market for this long, it is safe."

Diaz said the parents put the twins in the travel bed for a nap. "The daughter was fine, the son never woke up," she said.

Ken Kaiser, president of KidCo, said his company, which makes home safety and natural feeding products for children, has sold 220,000 of the travel beds since 2005. This is their first recall.

KidCo is offering kits to address the danger. The kits include supports that strengthen the sides of the tent and a thinner air mattress. Together, Kaiser said, they prevent the pocket from forming.

The safety commission's chairwoman, Inez Tenenbaum, encouraged parents to get the kit, particularly during the holidays, when parents are likely travel with children.

"We believe that having the inflatable mattress much smaller reduces the chances of entrapment between the mattress and the fabric side of the tent. We want to make sure the suffocation risk is removed."

Safety, Kaiser said, is "what we're known for and it's what our reputation is built on. The concern was more of a design issue as to how the product mechanically works. The kit adequately addresses that."

But Nancy Cowles, executive director of Kids in Danger, says her Chicago-based consumer safety group would prefer to see refunds offered, rather than the kits, so parents can buy products tested for safety standards.

"This was a product intended for a baby to sleep in," she said. "But parents don't realize that because it's not a crib or a bassinette or a play yard, there's no standard, it's not tested to be safe for sleeping."

A product where a child is sleeping needs to be safe enough without the parent constantly checking on them, Cowles said.

The recalled products, KidCo PeaPod Travel Beds and PeaPod Plus Travel Beds, are small, portable sleep tents marketed for use by infants from birth to 3-plus years, depending on the model. The tents have a zippered side for putting in and taking out the child and have an inflatable air mattress that fits into a zippered pocket underneath the floor of the tent. The travel tents were made in China and sold at independent juvenile specialty stores nationwide and online at Amazon.com from January 2005 through the present for between $70 and $100.

For more information, consumers can call KidCo toll-free at 855-847-8600 between 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. EST Monday through Friday or visit the company's website at http://www.kidco.com [1] and click on "recall info" to receive the kit.

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[1] http://www.kidco.com