The RAPEX Rapid Alert System

RAPEX stands for "Rapid Exchange of Information System (RAPEX)". This is an online-rapid alert system of the European Commission for Europe-wide distribution of warnings relating to products posing a serious risk to health and safety. The kinds of products concerned are articles of daily use such as toys, clothing, footwear, cosmetics, tools, cars, electrical appliances, etc.

RAPEX does not cover products for professional use or products which fall under separate EU legislation such as food or pharmaceuticals.

Guidelines for the establishment and management of the RAPEX system were laid down in the European Commission Decision 2010/15/EU of 16 December 2009 setting out the mechanisms for rapid exchange of information via "RAPEX" between the Member States and the Commission.

The goal of RAPEX is to enable adoption of rapid preventative and restrictive measures as soon as a product is seen to pose a serious risk to health and safety of consumers. This should eliminate, or at least reduce, the risk of consumers coming into contact with hazardous products.

RAPEX Warnings

Current RAPEX warnings are published every Friday on the online platform of the "Directorate-General for Health and Consumers" of the European Commission.

A RAPEX warning provides information about the product, the risk which it poses, and the measures taken in the country from which the warning came. In this way, RAPEX permits rapid EU-wide exchange of information about measures adopted by the authorities in individual states, such as product recalls or attachment of warning labels, or about voluntary measures adopted by manufacturers or importers, such as the voluntary withdrawal of an article from the market.

RAPEX Notification Criteria

Member States are legally bound to participate in the RAPEX system. To this end, RAPEX contact points, RAPEX networks, and RAPEX teams which collect and evaluate pertinent information have been set up on an EU-wide and on a national level.

A RAPEX notification must be submitted if

- a consumer product poses a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers
- the serious risk has cross-border implications
- measures have been adopted which prevent, restrict, or impose specific conditions on the possible marketing or use of a product.

Voluntary measures adopted by distributors and manufacturers to prevent risks to consumers posed by the product they have made available to the market also have to be notified ("business notification"). If all RAPEX notification criteria of a "business notification" are fulfilled, the competent authority of the relevant Member State must submit the RAPEX notification immediately upon receipt.

Products in the Spotlight of RAPEX Notifications

RAPEX notifications are submitted particularly frequently for the following consumer products:

Product	Hazard inducer	Typical injury/Hazard
Plastic toys	Prohibited plasticisers (phthalates)	Chemical hazard Adverse effects on the endocrine system
Toys	Detached small parts	Choking hazard if swallowed
Children's clothing	Hood drawstrings, laces	Strangulation
Footwear	Chromium VI	Chemical hazard Sensitising, allergic reactions
Footwear	Dimethyl fumarate (DMF)	Chemical hazard Sensitising, allergic reactions
Footwear	Azo dyes	Chemical hazard Carcinogenic action
Jewellery	Nickel	Chemical hazard Sensitising, allergic reactions
Clothing	Allergenic disperse dyes	Chemical hazard Sensitising, allergic reactions
Cosmetics	Formaldehyde	Chemical hazard Carcinogenic action
Plastic articles	Cadmium	Environmental hazard
Electrical articles	Exposed conductive parts	Electric shock
Cars	Faulty components	Risk of injury
Fireworks	Noise level too high	Damage to hearing

RAPEX Risk Assessment

Before deciding to submit a RAPEX notification, a competent authority of a Member State must perform an appropriate risk assessment in order to ascertain whether the product to be notified poses a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers and whether the RAPEX notification criteria are thus fulfilled.

A hazard exists if a product could cause injury to a consumer using the product. Whether the user belongs to a vulnerable group (for example, children) and also the nature and duration of foreseeable use as well as possible consumer behaviour in the case of exceptional incidents or emergency situations are taken into account. RAPEX risk assessment distinguishes between different types of hazard, for example mechanical hazard, choking hazard, hazards posed by electricity, heat, fire, radiation, or noise, or chemical/toxicological or microbiological hazards.

RAPEX – Once and For Evermore?

Notifications distributed through the RAPEX application remain in the system for an unlimited period of time.

Cases in which a permanent withdrawal is possible:

- The RAPEX notification criteria are demonstrably not met.
  This applies, for example, if it is established that the original risk assessment was performed incorrectly and that the notified product does not pose a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers. It also covers situations where the notified measures were successfully challenged in court or in other proceedings and they are no longer valid.

- No measures were undertaken.
  This can happen if a notification is distributed through the RAPEX application (for information purposes) before it was decided to adopt measures.

- There is proof that the product is no longer marketed.
  All product units made available to the market must be withdrawn from the market and recalled in all Member States.

- The notified product has been subsequently modified and meets all safety requirements.
  However, removal from the RAPEX list is possible only if all units of the hazardous product made available to the market have been withdrawn and recalled in all Member States and they are no longer marketed.

Any questions? Please contact:
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