



Safety Advocate Advises Daycares Across America to Replace Corded Window Coverings with Plantation Shutters

Sunburst Shutters is first the shutter company to receive the window safety seal of approval. Every October is Window Covering Safety Month and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and Parents for Window Blind Safety work diligently to educate the public about the hazards of window coverings with cords. Children continue to die from strangulation in window cords despite recent industry efforts to offer "safety kits" for corded window coverings such as mini-blinds or shades. It is estimated that as many as 89 children have died due to strangulation from 2000, the year the safety kits were introduced, through 2005.

Sunburst Shutters, the nation's leading manufacturer of interior shutters, and Parents for Window Blind Safety (PFWBS) are educating the public about the hazards that corded window coverings present to children. PFWBS is advising homes and daycare centers that the only way to completely avoid these hazards is to replace corded window coverings with cordless products like plantation shutters. The organization has recognized Sunburst Shutters as the first shutter company to receive the non-profit's Safety Seal of Approval, which is awarded after rigorous testing confirms the window treatment is completely safe for children.

As part of Sunburst's window covering safety education campaign, the company donated more than 1,000 square feet of interior shutters to daycare centers in select cities that previously had mini blinds on their windows.

"Many childcare facilities continue to use corded window treatments, but they don't know that safety kits do not make vertical blinds, pleated shades, and horizontal blinds any safer than they were 20 years ago," said Linda Kaiser, Founder and Executive Director of PFWBS. "These safety kits still pose a dangerous and potentially fatal threat to young children. Safety kits don't work— a plantation shutter is the best solution."

A 1997 study, published in the *Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA)* estimated that 359 children were strangled by window covering cords from 1981 to 1995, which averages to approximately one child strangling every two weeks. The study went on to reveal that an estimated 49 percent of cases

of children strangling in window cords go unreported. Deaths of children three and younger account for over 90 percent of the window-covering related deaths, making daycares and homes with small children particularly vulnerable locations for similar tragedies.

"We have identified eight different ways a small child can strangle in a window covering cord," said Kaiser. "But the most common method is older children reaching pull cords that are tied up out of their reach—a hazard that manufacturers don't tell you about on window coverings they are manufacturing today. Another strangulation danger is from the inner cord—the cord that is attached to each louver. We feel that awareness, education, and the willingness to replace dangerous blinds with safer alternatives such as interior shutters are the only ways to reduce the prevalence of these tragic situations."

Kaiser, whose daughter was strangled in mini blinds in 2001, has made it her mission to spread the word about the potential dangers involved with corded window coverings.

"There's one rule to follow," says Dix Jarman, CEO of Sunburst Shutters. "When it comes to window treatments, kids and cords don't mix. Parents need to be aware that any cord can pose a danger, even if they are tied up and secured to a wall."

Interior shutters are a safe alternative to corded window coverings because there are no cords involved. Sunburst Shutters' louvers pose no strangulation threat to small children. In addition, it is physically impossible for a child to fit into the space between each louver of the shutter.

"We are very proud to be involved with such an important cause and believe that window covering safety is something that every parent and caretaker should be aware of," said Jarman. "We hope that the public will start seeking out safer alternatives and ultimately stop these avoidable tragedies from taking place."

For more information on the dangers of corded window treatments, visit: <http://www.pfwbs.org>

