

TV Safety

The deaths of four Chicago-area children since late October after TVs toppled on them are prompting calls for more safety measures and increased awareness.

A recent fatality happened when 1-year-old Toddler bumped an older TV that weighed more than 100 pounds and was on an aquarium stand. It fell on him, fracturing his skull.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission says 169 children 8 and younger died between 2000 and 2010 from falling TVs. In all, 245 children died in that period after being crushed by TVs, furniture or appliances. More than 22,000 were treated for tip-over injuries each year from 2008 to 2010.

"This is not as uncommon as people might think, sadly," says John Drengenberg, consumer safety director at Underwriters Laboratories, which sets safety standards for TVs and other products. It puts TVs on a 10-degree incline and tests stability.

He urges parents to use stands or shelves that are big and sturdy enough to support TVs and have no drawers that children can stand on, and refraining from putting remote controls, toys or anything else atop the sets.

Gary Smith, a pediatric emergency physician in Columbus, Ohio, and president of the Child Injury Prevention Alliance, says requiring retailers to sell safety straps or mounting brackets with TVs would reduce the problem.

"We wouldn't purchase a car without seat belts," he says. "We shouldn't sell TVs without appropriate safety equipment."

Charlie's House, an organization in Kansas City, Mo., whose founders' son, Charlie Horn, 2, was fatally crushed in 2007 when a bedroom dresser fell on him as he tried to

climb it, has given away almost 15,000 safety straps for furniture and TVs. "Awareness and education" are key, says Maureen Huffer, a board of directors member.

Sales manager at Abt Electronics in Glenview, Ill., says old TVs often are more dangerous: A 32-inch tube TV weighs about 325 pounds, he says, while a new 32-inch flat screen weighs 60 pounds.

The safest place for a TV, he says, is bolted to an adequately sized stand or strapped or mounted on a wall 5 feet up where children can't reach it.

Reference: USA Today

