



AUSTRALIAN COMPETITION  
& CONSUMER COMMISSION

# Button battery safety

## Assessment of regulatory options

19 March 2020

The ACCC is seeking feedback on proposed regulatory options to reduce the risk of serious harm posed by button batteries if swallowed or inserted by children.

Button batteries, also known as coin-cell batteries, is a broad term which includes all flat, round, batteries with diameters up to 32 mm and heights ranging from 1–11 mm. This includes lithium, alkaline, silver oxide and zinc-air button battery types.

Button batteries are used in a wide range of personal and household products, including children's toys, lights, watches, remote controls, digital thermometers, greeting cards and bathroom scales.



### What is the problem?

Button batteries can cause severe injury and death, particularly in children aged 0–5 years. Young children are at the greatest risk due to their narrower oesophagus and tendency to place small objects into their mouths, ears and noses.

Two children in Australia have tragically died from injuries caused by swallowing a button battery and many thousands of Australian children have presented at hospital emergency departments.

Globally, there have been at least 64 confirmed child deaths from button battery ingestions and thousands of exposures and injuries, including lifelong injuries to some children.

### How do children access button batteries?

Children can access button batteries in a variety of ways, including:

- products with battery compartments that aren't secure
- packaging that is not child resistant
- poor quality products being dropped or broken
- spare batteries being provided loose in product packaging
- spare batteries not being kept out of reach around the home.

## Why is the ACCC taking action?

Voluntary self-regulatory measures have not effectively addressed the hazard of button batteries for the wide range of consumer goods in which they are used.

Coronial inquests into the deaths of four-year-old Summer Steer, from Queensland, and 14-month-old Isabella Rees, from Victoria, have recommended a national, consistent approach to product safety that includes a range of products and packaging containing button batteries.

The ACCC considers regulatory action is needed to reduce the harm caused by button batteries.

## What is the ACCC proposing?

Our consultation paper outlines proposed requirements for button batteries and the products that contain them.

Consultation will run for six weeks. The ACCC will consider all responses and make a Final Recommendation to the Commonwealth Government in 2020.

## Summary of proposed requirements

### Button batteries

All button batteries available for sale or provided with consumer goods (i.e. where the battery is not pre-installed in a secure battery compartment) would be required:

- to be supplied in child-resistant packaging
- to include warnings and information on packaging and instructions.

### Consumer goods that use button batteries

Consumer goods that use button batteries would be required:

- to have a battery compartment that is secured by screw or similar fasteners so batteries can only be accessed by using a tool (where batteries are intended to be replaced)
- to fully secure batteries inside the product by the use of soldering, fasteners such as rivets, or similar (where batteries are not intended for removal or replacement)
- to meet compliance tests focused on the security and durability of the product when subjected to normal use and foreseeable abuse, including any battery compartment and fasteners
- to include warnings and information on the product (where practicable), packaging and instructions.

## Warnings and information to be made available at point of sale

Warnings and information would be made available to consumers at the point of sale and prior to purchase in circumstances when:

- button batteries and consumer goods that use button batteries are sold online
- unpackaged consumer goods containing button batteries are supplied to consumers.

## Are any exemptions proposed?

We consider that the following exemptions are appropriate:

- an exemption from the secure battery compartment requirement for hearing aid devices
- an exemption from child-resistant packaging requirements for zinc air batteries intended for hearing aid devices (i.e. zinc air batteries packaged in a dial mechanism).

## Have your say

The ACCC invites you to comment on the consultation paper and proposed requirements. Submissions must be provided on or before **30 April 2020**.

## More information

For more information on how to make a submission or fill out an online questionnaire on the ACCC's Button Battery Safety consultation paper, visit [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au).