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NOTICE

All Posture / Safety Belts fitted to Hoists, Seating, Stair Lifts, Buggies and Wheelchairs

IMB Safety Notice: SN2009(07)
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MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER

Various manufacturers

TARGET GROUPS

Hospital CEO's
Health Service Executive
Community Care Managers
Occupational Therapists
Health Visitors
Carers of the Elderly
Primary, Community & Continuing Care
Risk Managers
Loan Store Managers
Children's Disability Services
Educational Establishments
Providers of assistive technologies e.g. Central Remedial Clinic / National Rehabilitation Hospital

ISSUE

Use of an inappropriate type of, or incorrectly fitted or adjusted posture/safety belt can lead to a serious injury or death of the occupant. This safety notice also applies to belts, which are often referred to as pelvic, lap, seat or waist belts, positioning belts and also straps or harnesses.

BACKGROUND

The IMB have been advised of a number of incidents and field safety corrective actions in relation to different types of posture/safety belts. The reports relate to the inappropriate use, fitting, adjustment and maintenance of posture/safety belts fitted on assistive technology devices. The incorrect choice of product or poorly fitted or adjusted belt could result in the occupant slipping down in their seat and suffering positional asphyxiation or sustaining an injury from falling from the seat. It has been identified that the cause of these incidents is the use of an inappropriate type of, or incorrectly fitted or adjusted posture/safety belt

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ACTION OR RECOMMENDATIONS

To reduce the likelihood of similar incidents occurring, the IMB recommend the following actions:

Choice of product

- Ensure that careful consideration is given to the purchase of all posture/safety belts. Posture/safety belts should meet the needs of the occupant. The risk of using such posture/safety belts with the very young and with agitated patients should be considered. The level of supervision being provided should also be taken in account.
- Ensure that the review of an individual's needs includes consideration of the appropriateness of the posture/safety belt for the occupant and their carers.
- Carers should ensure that the prescriber of the posture/safety belt is notified if there is a change of function, change of medical status or change in weight of the client.
- The posture/safety belt must not be reused by persons other than the person for whom the posture/safety belt was prescribed without assessment.
- Posture/safety belts should not be used as a form of restraint in the absence of supervision. Where a restraint is being considered, it should be used in addition to the posture/safety belt.

Manufacturer guidance

- Ensure that all posture/safety belts for seating, stair lifts, hoists, buggies and wheelchairs are fitted, adjusted, used, cleaned, checked and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Ensure parts are replaced, as required.
- Ensure that the manufacturer's instructions for use is provided to the user or carer. The instructions for use provides important guidance on how to check, adjust, clean and maintain the posture/safety belt.

Regular checks

- Before each use, ensure that the posture/safety belt is in a satisfactory condition, is appropriate for the occupant, and is adjusted correctly.

Reporting

- Report any inadequacies in the manufacturer's instructions for use to the manufacturer and the IMB.
- Report any adverse incidents relating to posture/safety belts to the manufacturer and the IMB.

While this is not an exhaustive list of actions/recommendations, each care giver should ensure that a full check of the device is performed so that no risk of injury exists for the occupant. This safety notice is intended to promote awareness of the need to check all equipment prior to use and ensure it is appropriate for the intended use. Please ensure the appropriate personnel and care givers are made aware of this notice.

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ENQUIRIES

All adverse incidents relating to a medical device should be reported to the:

Irish Medicines Board
Human Safety Products Monitoring Department
Kevin O'Malley House
Earlsfort Centre
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin 2

Telephone: +353-1-6764971
Fax: +353-1-6344033
E-mail: vigilance@imb.ie
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