



# DEFECT & INVESTIGATION CENTRE

## FOR ACTION BY:

Chief Executive of each HSS Trust  
General Manager/Chief Executive of each HSS Board  
General Manager/Chief Executive of each Agency

Stoney Road Dundonald Belfast  
Northern Ireland BT16 1US

Telephone 028 90 523714  
Facsimile 028 90 523900

HN(NI) 2000/17

Date: 25 July 2000

Product	:	<b>BED SIDE RAILS (COTSIDES) – RISK OF ENTRAPMENT AND ASPHYXIATION</b>
Manufacturer/Supplier	:	Various
Problem	:	Risk of death from entrapment and asphyxiation of people in beds fitted with incompatible side rails.
Action	:	Ensure correct side rails are supplied.

# HAZARD

## 1. ATTENTION CHIEF EXECUTIVES/GENERAL MANAGERS

This notice should be brought to the immediate attention of all who need to know, or be aware of it including those listed below, in accordance with local procedures, and immediate action should be taken as detailed aside:

- Liaison Officers (for onward distribution)
- Nursing Executive Directors
- Medical, Nursing and Care Staff
- Carers of the Elderly
- Learning Disability Services
- Social Services staff including Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists
- Supplies Staff
- Safety Officers
- Risk Managers
- Loan Store managers
- General Practitioners

Boards/Trusts should ensure that if appropriate, this information is passed to **ALL** persons having the responsibility for premises registered under "THE REGISTERED HOMES (NI) ORDER 1992".



An Executive Agency of the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety

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## 2. IMMEDIATE ACTION

Those responsible for the purchase, supply and fitting of side rails should ensure that:

- When supplying side rails, due consideration is given to the type of bed they will be fitted to, so that only the correct type of side rails are supplied;
- Side rails in use in the Community are checked for compatibility with the beds they are fitted to and that they do not present a risk of entrapment;
- Procedures are in place to ensure that, at the time of fitting, side rails are assessed in combination with the bed and the occupant to determine if any entrapment hazards exist (consideration should be given to the occupant's physiological size).

## 3. BACKGROUND

The Department advised in 1997 (Hazard Notice HN(NI)97/3) on the potential risk of entrapment and asphyxiation of people in beds fitted with side rails. The Notice advised that care must be taken when selecting, positioning and adjusting side rails to ensure that any spaces within the rails or between the rails and mattress, or parts of the bed, do not allow entrapment of the occupant's head or body.

Incidents of entrapment continue to occur, particularly with people being cared for in the Community.

The Department has received a report of an incident where a person asphyxiated after slipping through a gap between a side rail and their bed. The side rail was of a type commonly sold for use with divan beds, but in this instance it had been unsuitably used with a hospital metal bedstead.

There is an extensive range of side rails in use and on the market; because there is also an extensive range of beds in use, there is the opportunity for incompatible side rails and beds to be used together. Using side rails on beds for which they were not designed can create entrapment hazards.

## 4. ENQUIRIES

Enquiries regarding this notice should be addressed as follows:

NORTHERN IRELAND DEFECT & INVESTIGATION CENTRE (NIDIC)

Health Estates

Estate Policy

Stoney Road

Dundonald

Belfast BT16 1US

*marked for the attention of Mr Brian Godfrey*

Tel: 028 90 523714

Fax: 028 90 523900

Email: [brian.godfrey@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:brian.godfrey@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Yours faithfully

BRIAN GODFREY

Defect Centre Manager

### HOW TO REPORT DEFECTS

Professional Estate Letter PEL(93)36 issued by Estate Services Directorate, on 27th July 1994 advises Health and Social Services Boards, HSS Trusts and agencies how to notify HPSS about accidents with and defects in medicinal products, buildings and plant and other medical and non medical equipment and supplies.



HN(NI)2000/17

# HAZARD

**Title:**

**BED SIDE RAILS (COTSIDES) – RISK OF ENTRAPMENT  
AND ASPHYXIATION**

**ACTION BY:**

**(A) BOARD/TRUST**

Address/Address Stamp

This document was forwarded to the relevant Department/Personnel for action on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

**(B) RECIPIENT** [Please return to the Issuing Authority **at (A) above**, after completed action]

Receipt of the document is acknowledged and appropriate action completed on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Position

Name (please print)

Address

**(C) COMMENTS ON ACTION TAKEN**