

Senate bill seeks regulation for button-cell batteries

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Chairman John D. Rockefeller of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation introduced a bill last Thursday that would make it harder for children to access button cell batteries, significantly reducing the risk of ingestion.

More than 3,400 button cell battery ingestion cases were reported to U.S. poison centers each year between 2007 and 2010, resulting in hundreds of injuries and six deaths, according to the National Poison Data System. Ingestions that resulted in injuries have increased sevenfold since 1985 due to the higher voltage of newer batteries.

“These tiny batteries are just the sort of thing a curious child might swallow. And the damage can be irreparable,” said Chairman Rockefeller in a [press release](#). “We need to make sure that these batteries are securely enclosed in products and can’t be removed by children, and we must also make sure that parents and caretakers are aware of the danger. We have the ability to better protect children and it’s our responsibility to do so.”

Under the proposed Button Cell Battery Safety Act of 2011, the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) would create two sets of standards for producing button cell batteries. The first standard would secure button cell battery compartments to prevent access by children. The second would mandate that warning labels be placed on battery packaging, in any literature that is included with the product, and where feasible, on the product itself.

In March, the [CPSC](#) issued a warning to consumers about button cell batteries, and recommending that consumers dispose of them properly and keep them out of the reach of children.

In May, Consumers Union applauded Rockefeller’s work in a [letter](#), saying that when batteries are swallowed, they can do lasting damage to the esophagus, stomach, or intestines within a few hours.

Read more:

[Button-cell battery dangers: Dr. Toby Litovitz](#)

[Safety alert: Button batteries](#)

[Deadly batteries that are cute as a button](#)

—*Evan MacDonald*

