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Returning, replacing recalled cribs not easy for parents

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LAKE WORTH — When Lake Worth mother Stephanie Thompson recognized her daughter's crib on a TV news report last week about product recalls, she was incredulous.

"I thought, 'Ah, you gotta be kidding me!' " she said.

Aubrey Thompson

Breaking news: Stork Craft recalls more than 1 million cribs

What to do: Crib safety advice from a local mom

Recall announcement: See photos of cribs, model #

Important numbers:

Families who think they may own cribs affected by the recall should call these phone numbers:

Jardine Recall Hotline: (800) 646-4106

CPSC Recall Hotline: (800) 638-2772

Families can call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at (800) 638-2772 for referrals to local organizations that donate cribs.

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Sure enough, Thompson's two-year-old crib was one of 56,000 cribs being recalled by manufacturer Jardine Enterprises of Taipei, Taiwan. Wood slats in the crib can break, creating a gap that could entrap or strangle a child.

The company has received 19 reports of broken crib slats. None resulted in injuries.

An earlier recall in June of 28 similar models, however, followed 42 incidents. Two children were trapped, sustaining cuts and bruises.

"I'm surprised she hasn't already kicked the slat," said Thompson of her daughter, Aubrey, 24-months-old. "She's a really strong feisty little girl."

But Thompson and other parents are discovering that returning the crib is easier said than done.

On online forums like urbanmamas.com and babble.com, parents are complaining about the delay to get a voucher for a new, safe crib: A month is not unusual. After calling the company's hot line, parents say they may wait seven to 10 days to receive a kit to disassemble the crib; another week or more between the time the parts are sent and the time they get to the manufacturer; and another week or so before the mail delivers a coupon from Jardine to buy a new crib.

Although parents can purchase a new crib and receive reimbursement, some may not be able to pay \$200 to \$400 out-of-pocket for a new baby bed.

There's no shortcut, such as simply returning the crib to the store where it was purchased, instead of dismantling it and sending it to Jardine.

The company is emphatic that they get the bed back. "We want to make sure products won't be put back to use," said Rick Locker, spokesman for Jardine.

But the delay creates another problem: Babies can be very fussy about changes to their sleep patterns. One mother on urbanmamas.com commented that she would to have to go through weaning her son from her bed all over again when she got the replacement.

"The way you teach your baby to sleep is because they go to sleep in the same place all the time," explained Dr. Ivy Faske, a pediatrician in Palm Beach Gardens. "In this case, you are going to have some sleep issues."

Katherine Scoleri, a West Palm Beach mother, is the editor of safemama.com, a blog on product safety.

She advises parents to keep up to date with recalls by signing up for emails from U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission or checking their website, which she does daily. Scoleri started her blog a year ago after her toddler son Reilly's toy boat was recalled because of lead paint.

"You go through a lot of shock," she said.

After that, she started to research safety issues.

"The more you stay informed, the more you stay ahead of the game," said Scoleri. "There are so many parents who never even hear about the recalls."

Thompson agrees: "I was lucky to be in the room when it came on TV."