



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION:

December 20, 2010

CONTACT: Thomas Christensen (619) 515-6635

TROUBLE IN TOYLAND

Some Toys Can Be Worse Than Annoying

Toys with all the gizmos and gadgets that produce lights and sounds might keep children interested and occupied. However, along with the laughs and entertainment could come hearing loss if the toys children are playing with are extremely loud.

Today, San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency and First 5 San Diego officials warned parents about dangerously loud toys and how they could damage a children's hearing, as well as their physical and psychological health.

"December is Toy Safety Month and it is timely to remind people about the need to keep small toys away from very young children and put helmets on the heads of the bigger kids with new bikes and skateboards," said San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts, District 4. "One of the most over-looked safety concerns involves loss of hearing. Many people simply dismiss noise as a nuisance without realizing that exposing children to those sounds over an extended period of time can result in serious hearing loss."

Because of excessive exposure to noise, an estimated five million American children suffer from noise-induced hearing loss, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The American Academy of Pediatrics uses 85 decibels as the threshold for dangerous levels of noise – the equivalent of the sound of busy city traffic or a hair dryer. Hearing loss can begin to occur after just eight hours of exposure at that level.

"Exposure to loud noise during critical periods of development can have a devastating effect on a child," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "If not treated early, hearing difficulties can affect a child's speech and language skills. These skills are critical to a child's ability to learn and succeed in school and will have a lasting effect their whole lives."

First 5 San Diego's Healthy Development Services provides free developmental checkups for children through 5 years of age, including screening for hearing problems and referrals to specialized treatment if needed.

"Many times children who are suspected of having learning difficulties or behavior problems have undiagnosed hearing loss," said Barbara Jiménez, Executive Director, First 5 San Diego. "Our goal is to diagnose and refer hearing problems in young children as early as possible so that children enter school ready to learn."

To get connected to First 5 Healthy Development Services or for more information about other First 5 San Diego programs, you can call 1-888-5-FIRST-5 or visit www.first5sandiego.org.

###

FOLLOW THE [COUNTY](#) ON [TWITTER](#), [FACEBOOK](#) AND [YOUTUBE](#)

COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 208 • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-2472