

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

BANNED BLIND CORDS

Curtain and Blind Cords – Safety Requirements

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the purpose of the new legislation?

A: The safety requirements are intended to minimise or prevent the risk of injury or death to children from looped cords. At least 10 Australian children have died from accidental strangulation in blind or curtain cords since 2000, and 180 children have died in the US since 1991. These are avoidable deaths.

Q: What sort of blinds and curtains are captured by the requirements of the new law?

A: Any blinds, curtains, shades and associated hardware (tracks or traverse rods) intended for indoor use that has a looped cord, beaded chain or other flexible looped device. Refer to the definition in Schedule 1 of the gazetted ban.

Q: Who is required to comply with the law?

A: Any business involved in manufacturing and supplying blinds and curtains (eg to both consumers and retailers) must ensure that at the point of the supply, the product meets the required design safety and labelling requirements.

Q: What happens if the customer doesn't want the safety devices or labels installed?

A: You must still supply compliant goods, including labels and any safety devices. The maximum penalty under the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act* for supplying non-compliant goods is 2500 penalty units (currently \$275,000). A supplier cannot be held responsible if the end user decides to remove the safety features.

One option is to make a note that compliant goods have been supplied and, if possible, get the customer to sign it. In any case, you should seek your own legal advice.

Q: I have a blind with a 1500mm drop. How can I have a cord that ends 1600mm from the base of the covering, as required by the law?

A: You can still use a looped cord but it must have an effective safety device fitted (eg tensioner, break away device or cleat).

The intention of the law is to create a 1600mm high safety zone from the base of the covering, to ensure children cannot reach the cord with the covering in the lowered position. Looped cords that do not enter the 1600mm safety zone do not require the safety devices. If safety devices are fitted, the cord may extend into the 1600mm safety zone.

Q: I have three blinds all side by side. If the left and right blinds have cleats to the side walls how do I make the cord from the middle blind safe?

A: It may be possible to install a tension device on the floor, install a break away device in the cord or shorten the cord to more than 1600mm above the base of the covering.

Q: Are curtain tiebacks or the chains located at the base of vertical blinds, used to keep the blades together, captured by this law?

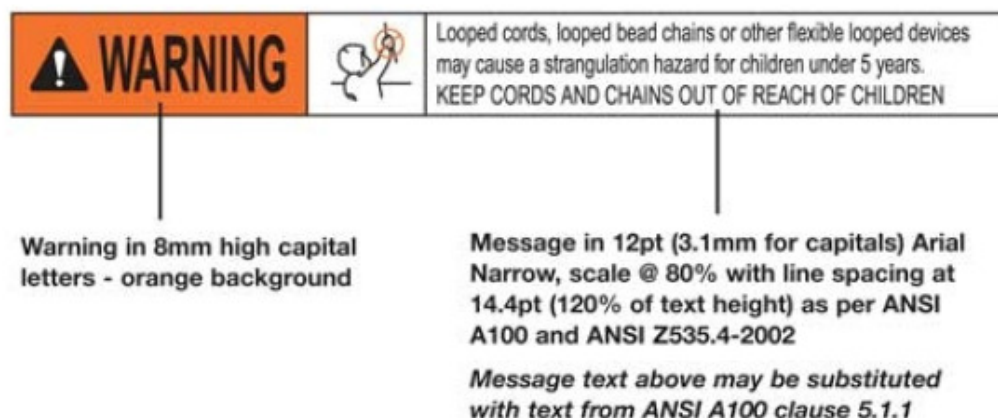
A: No

Q: What labelling must I supply?

A: There are three labels that must be supplied to all customers.

1. A general warning label that complies with the requirements of ANSI A100:1996 5.1.1 that contains the wording in Schedule 3(1)(a) of the gazetted ban:
WARNING Looped cords, looped bead chains or other flexible looped devices may cause strangulation hazard for children under 5 years. KEEP CORDS AND CHAINS OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.

An example of a warning label:

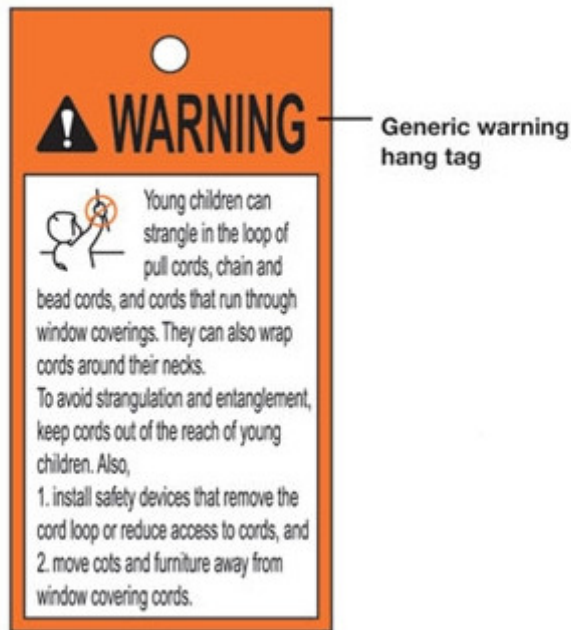


This label should be fixed to the bottom rail of the internal window covering.

Where there is no bottom rail, the label must be placed where it is visible to consumers. It is up to the supplier or manufacturer to determine where this label can be placed on their particular product/s. Where the nature or covering is such that the label cannot practically be applied, the supplier or manufacturer may place this label on either the tracks or cords.

A label placed on the back of the window covering would not be 'visible' to consumers.

2. A warning tag must be attached to the cord as per the example below:



3. If a safety device is fitted, a tag with instructions on how to operate the device is required (see example below). This can be included on the warning tag above in point 2.



Where the goods are provided for the consumer to install, certain information must be provided. This information includes installation instructions and carries a warning statement. Specific details about this requirement can be found in the gazetted ban.

Q: What safety devices can I use to make a blind safe?

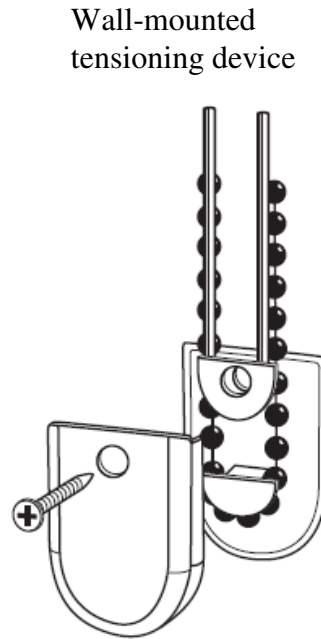
A: Tension devices, retraction devices, release device – breakaway cord link, cord shroud or a cleat.

A cleat should only be used on products where the cord becomes longer/shorter when operated, such as Venetian or Roman blinds. Cleats should not be used for beaded chains because there are more effective safety devices available.

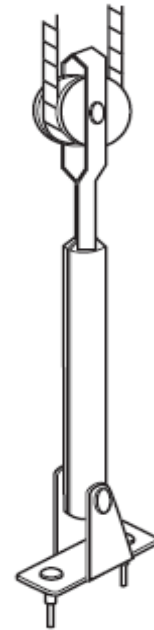
A cleat should be positioned a minimum of 1600mm from the floor in order to minimise the risk of children becoming entangled.



A cleat



Floor-mounted tensioning device



Suppliers or manufacturers of corded internal window coverings may also choose to explore other options, such as providing single cords rather than loops, or redesigning their product to eliminate hazardous cords. Suppliers or manufacturers should ensure that if single cords are used, they are aware that using clips or similar devices to hold the cords together may inadvertently form a loop.

Components such as breakaway devices must not pose a choking hazard after releasing the cords. A 35mm film canister can be used to roughly determine a potential choking hazard, although further advice should be sought (refer to the definitions in Schedule 1 of the gazetted ban).

Q: Where can I obtain a copy of the relevant Standards?

A: SAI Global – Phone: 131 242 Fax: 1300 65 49 49

**For further information contact
Consumer Affairs**

Phone (08) 8999 1999 or 1800 019 319 SMS 040 111 6801

Email: consumer@nt.gov.au

Web site: consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au

General Disclaimer: The material contained in this publication is intended for use as a guide and for general information only. It is not intended to be a substitute for independent professional advice. The Northern Territory Department of Justice accepts no responsibility or liability for the correctness, accuracy and completeness of any of the material contained in this publication and recommends that users of this publication exercise their own skill, care and judgment in the application of the information contained in the publication.