



## *Katie Elise Lambert Foundation*

### Bob and Judy Lambert: Making furniture safer for all

Some people are paralyzed by tragedy; others are mobilized by it. Bob and Judy Lambert fit the latter category -- and for that, consumers should be grateful.

In January 2005, the Lamberts were moving into a new house in a Philadelphia suburb. Their 3-year-old daughter Katie wandered into a bedroom and discovered a large 6-foot-high, mirrored wardrobe that had been left behind by the previous owner. Suddenly, there was a large crash. Judy rushed in to find Katie crushed beneath the fallen wardrobe. Being a nurse, she attempted CPR. Katie was rushed to the emergency room, but didn't survive.

Within weeks of Katie's death, the Lamberts went into action. The Katie Elise Lambert Foundation Web site was created to help educate consumers about the dangers of furniture tipover. As the Web site notes, an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 children are injured each year as the result of tipping furniture. One of the biggest problems is large TVs placed atop unsteady dressers, drawer chests and the like. Historically, about five children die annually from TV tipovers, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. But for the first seven months of 2006, there have already been 10 reported fatalities.

But their Web site is only one part of the Lamberts' multi-faceted safety campaign. The couple has also urged their local legislators to seek laws requiring tougher safety standards for furniture. Their goal is to get mandatory anchoring devices and warning labels posted on all assembled and ready-to-assemble furniture and major appliances. Currently, all such restraints and warning labels are voluntary.

This summer, Pennsylvania approved a law creating a statewide task force to review state laws and regulations and suggest ways to reduce child deaths. The law was introduced by Democrat Rep. Josh Shapiro after he met with Lamberts. Meanwhile, in the U.S. Congress, U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D-Pa.), is working on a bill that would require furniture to meet certain tipover standards and come with anchoring devices that can be used to safely secure furniture to walls. The House bill will also make ASTM International's furniture safety standard mandatory, once it has been strengthened to prevent tipovers.

Now, the Lamberts are part of the ASTM International subcommittee on Furniture Safety that is working to beef up the industry's voluntary standards. The Lamberts have been working with the subcommittee to develop a revised standard, which specifies better test methods and stricter requirements for warning labels and anchoring devices. Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, is also on the subcommittee and has demonstrated the inadequacies of the current standard. The revised standard will go to ballot soon. If consensus is reached among committee members, the standard will be published. But consumer advocates like the Lamberts are outnumbered by furniture manufactures on this committee. We expect that some manufacturers will try to stand in the way of affirming a revised standard. "Preventing any injuries and deaths to our children is our greatest hope," Bob Lambert said in an email. "No parent should ever have to watch their child die. No innocent life should be taken as the result of something so preventable."

What's next for the Lamberts? A training video on how to properly tether furniture -- because many manufacturers are skeptical that consumers would install the tethering devices correctly even if they are provided with furniture. Clearly, the Lamberts deserve to be singled out for this blog's second "safety crusader" for their work in trying to make this world a lot safer for children.

**"Share this message with all your friends and family. It could save another family the heartache of losing a child."**

**The Katie Elise Lambert Foundation is a 501 (c) 3 organization.**

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