

For Immediate Release

CARU RECOMMENDS MATTEL MORE CLEARLY DISCLOSE CONTENTS OF 'TOY STORY' PLAYSET

New York, NY – April 5, 2010 –The Children’s Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., has recommended that Mattel, Inc., modify broadcast advertising for the “Toy Story Pop-Open Playworld Storable Playset” and “Buddy Pack,” to better disclose which items come with each purchase.

Television advertising for the Mattel products came to the attention of CARU, the children’s advertising industry’s self-regulatory forum, through CARU’s routine monitoring of advertising directed to children.

The 30-second commercial at issue featured two children, the playset and additional action figures. A voice over stated, “Oh no, Buzz and Woody are caught in the claw in Pizza Planet,” as accompanying video showed the Buzz figure hanging from a crane and five alien action figures on the ground.

The commercial’s closing shot showed the Playset in the background and 17 action figures in the foreground. The announcer stated, “Toy Story Pop Open Play World, Buddy Packs each sold separately.”

The Playset includes two action figures: Buzz Lightyear and Scud. The Buddy Packs contain either two or three action figures depending upon which set is purchased.

After reviewing the advertisement and all of the evidence in this record, CARU determined that child viewers may not understand how many action figures are available with purchase of the Playset. In reaching its decision, CARU noted that the bulk of the commercial followed two young boys as they played with Buzz Light Year, Woody, Five Aliens and Scud.

CARU further noted that it is common in children’s advertising to show playsets with additional figures that are sold separately and that children are accustomed to seeing the play value of a main set extended with additional purchases. However, to avoid confusion, CARU consistently advises advertisers to clearly disclose information about products purchased separately, such as accessories or individual items in a collection.

Mattel, in its advertiser’s statement, said the company “is a long-time supporter of CARU and appreciates the opportunity to participate in the self-regulatory process. The media flight for this commercial has ended and there are no plans to air the ad again in the future. We thank CARU for their leadership in a meaningful self-regulatory program and will take CARU’s concerns into account for future advertisements.”

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CARU’s inquiry was conducted under NAD/CARU/NARB Procedures for the Voluntary Self-Regulation of National Advertising. Details of the initial inquiry, CARU’s decision, and the advertiser’s response will be included in the next NAD/CARU Case Report.

About Advertising Industry Self-Regulation: The National Advertising Review Council (NARC) was formed in 1971. NARC establishes the policies and procedures for the National Advertising Division (NAD) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, the CBBB's Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), the National Advertising Review Board (NARB) and the Electronic Retailing Self-Regulation Program (ERSP).

The NARC Board of Directors is composed of representatives of the American Advertising Federation, Inc. (AAF), American Association of Advertising Agencies, Inc., (AAAA), the Association of National Advertisers, Inc. (ANA), Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc. (CBBB), Direct Marketing Association (DMA), Electronic Retailing Association (ERA) and Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB). Its purpose is to foster truth and accuracy in national advertising through voluntary self-regulation.

NAD, CARU and ERSP are the investigative arms of the advertising industry's voluntary self-regulation program. Their casework results from competitive challenges from other advertisers, and also from self-monitoring traditional and new media. NARB, the appeals body, is a peer group from which ad-hoc panels are selected to adjudicate NAD/CARU cases that are not resolved at the NAD/CARU level. This unique, self-regulatory system is funded entirely by the business community; CARU is financed by the children's advertising industry, while NAD/NARC/NARB's primary source of funding is derived from membership fees paid to the CBBB. ERSP's funding is derived from membership in the Electronic Retailing Association. For more information about advertising industry self-regulation, please visit www.narcpartners.org.