

## Ikea Still Sells a Hemnes Dresser Linked to a Child's Death

The company has not recalled the 8-drawer dresser. Why not?

By Rachel Rabkin Peachman  
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ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS PHILPOT

The footage, recorded on the video monitor in the bedroom of Brock and Bowdy Shoff, is terrifying and dramatic.

The twin brothers, just 2 years old, are climbing onto an Ikea dresser when it tips over, pinning Brock below. After some effort, Bowdy manages to nudge the heavy piece of furniture just enough to let Brock slide out, crying but unharmed. (Watch [the video](#), below.)

The boys' parents, Kayli and Ricky Shoff of Orem, Utah, shared the video online, where it has been viewed more than 17 million times. "We wanted to warn other parents to secure their furniture to the wall," says Kayli, adding that neither she nor Ricky heard the dresser tip over that morning shortly after the boys woke up.

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But about five months later—on Mother's Day, May 14, 2017—the same kind of Ikea dresser, a Hemnes eight-drawer model, fell on another 2-year-old boy in his bedroom just after he woke up, according to public documents filed in a lawsuit against Ikea.

The boy, Conner, did not survive. His mother, Meghan DeLong of Lakeland, Fla., found him trapped and unresponsive under the dresser, according to the police report. The lawsuit was recently settled between DeLong and Ikea.

Despite the tragedy, Ikea still has not recalled the dresser.

When asked why not, Ikea U.S. spokesperson Leticia Bradley said that the dresser meets the furniture industry's voluntary stability standard, and so was not included in the recall of other Ikea furniture that the company launched in 2016.

"When assembled and used according to the instructions provided, all Ikea chests of drawers, including Hemnes eight-drawer, are safe to use," Bradley said.

But parents and safety advocates say these tip-over incidents reveal flaws with both the test used by the industry to determine when a piece of furniture is safe, and with the recall process itself.



## Test and Recall Problems

The voluntary safety standard for dressers (and for thousands of other consumer products) is established through ASTM International, an independent organization that includes industry, government agencies, and consumer groups (including Consumer Reports). The stability test for dressers involves hanging a 50-pound weight on each drawer while it is opened and the rest are closed, and seeing whether the dresser tips over.

Ikea says that because the Hemnes eight-drawer dresser passes that test, it doesn't need to be recalled.

But safety advocates say that the decision to recall a product should also be based on its safety in the real world.

"The Hemnes eight-drawer dresser has been linked to tip-overs and a child's death, and there's no excuse for Ikea's failure to recall it," says William Wallace, senior policy analyst at CR. "Ikea should immediately stop selling the dresser, contact existing owners, and offer them a refund in exchange for getting the dresser out of their homes. If Ikea won't take this action on its own, the government should intervene."

(CR has not tested this particular dresser but has looked at some others, including some dressers that are 30 inches tall and under. Several Ikea dressers passed even our most rigorous evaluations.)

DeLong, who declined to discuss the specifics of the dresser manufacturer or model involved in her son's death due to the terms of her legal settlement, recently spoke at an ASTM meeting, where she addressed what she sees as shortcomings in the dresser standard. She pointed out that her son was just 30 pounds, less than the weight used in the test, and that children don't necessarily open just one drawer at a time. "What that says to me is that this standard is not good enough," she said.

## Podcast: Hear Moms Tell Their Stories



The concerns highlighted by DeLong are shared by James Dickerson, Ph.D., CR's chief scientific officer.

"Right now, furniture stability testing is a static test, not a dynamic one. That means the weight and the drawers are not in motion during the test. We believe this issue should be addressed to help the testing more accurately reflect real-world scenarios."

In the meantime, with only a voluntary standard in place, it's up to the company—not advocates, parents, or the government—to determine that a product needs to be recalled, says Elliot Kaye, commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the government agency that oversees product safety.

With a voluntary standard, the government does not have the authority to require a recall solely because a product fails to meet the standard. Even if a dresser is involved in injuries or death, "there is no easy mechanism to take a dresser off the market," Kaye says.

When CR asked the CPSC if the agency was investigating the Hemnes eight-drawer dresser, a spokeswoman said confidentiality laws bar the agency from commenting. Ikea confirmed to CR that the CPSC is aware of both incidents involving this dresser.

CPSC can sue a manufacturer to force a recall if the agency determines that a product poses a substantial safety hazard. But that approach often requires long, complicated negotiations, and the threat of a lawsuit which—if filed—starts a process that can take years.

## Ikea's History of Tip-Overs

The lengthy process of recalling products covered by a voluntary standard unfolded with a different set of Ikea dressers more than two years ago. In June 2016, the company recalled several types of dressers—including all those in its Malm line—many of which had been linked to tip-overs. It took years of negotiations between the CPSC and Ikea, consumer lawsuits, and negative media attention before Ikea recalled those dressers.

As of November 2017, Ikea had received at least 299 reports of tip-overs involving various models of chests and dressers. The tip-over incidents include the deaths of at least eight children and injuries to 144 more. (Since November 2017, there have been at least two more documented deaths.)

At the time those dressers were recalled, Ikea said it was because the products didn't meet the industry's voluntary stability standard, and were a "serious tip-over hazard."

Included in the 2016 recall list were Hemnes dressers with two, three, five, and six drawers. Since then, Ikea has redesigned those dressers and several others, and has resumed selling them. But, Ikea says, because the Hemnes eight-drawer dresser did not fail the industry's stability test, the company maintains that the product is safe and has still not recalled it.



## Have you had a furniture tip-over incident?

Not everyone knows that large furniture—like dressers or chests—can tip over and cause injuries, especially to young children. Have you had a furniture tip-over incident in your home? Please tell us what piece of furniture fell, how it happened, and whether it caused injury to you or a loved one.

[Share Your Story](#)

## Anchors: An Imperfect Solution

Ikea says the best way to prevent furniture tip-overs is to attach the products to the wall using anti-tip restraints (often called furniture anchors), which are included with its dressers.

Furniture safety experts also emphasize the importance of anchoring. But they note that most people don't take that step. Only about a quarter of Americans have secured furniture to the wall in their homes, according to a recent nationally representative CR survey of 1,502 U.S. adults.

Clothes and shoe storage 237

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05 HEMNES 8-drawer dresser \$279

01 HEMNES Wardrobe with two sliding doors\* \$379 Stained, clear lacquered solid pine. RA. W47 1/4 x D23 1/4 x H77 1/2". 103.213.26

02 HÖJET Rug, flatwoven \$149 Handwoven. Use with STOPP FILT anti-slip rug underlay, sold separately. 100% Pure New Wool surface. 100% cotton weft. Imported. W5'7" x L7'10". 603.820.44

03 KUBBIS Rack with seven hooks \$14.99 Painted solid birch. RA. W41 1/4 x D4 x H3 1/2". 003.742.64

04 NEW ARÖD Work lamp \$39.99 Powder-coated steel. RA. H20 1/4". 904.072.41 In compliance with California Title 20 regulations, lighting prices and features may vary in the state of California. Please see your local IKEA store for details.

The Hemnes eight-drawer dresser, as shown on the Ikea website.

Anchoring "didn't even cross our minds," says Kayli Shoff, the mother of twins Brock and Bowdy.

DeLong says it didn't cross her mind either. Nor, she says, was it brought to her attention by representatives from the Florida Department of Children and Families, who visited and vetted her house several times before she adopted Conner and his brother Kaleb.

As part of the adoption process, the state agency does multiple home study reports where "they go through your home with a fine-tooth comb," and, DeLong says, they didn't mention anything about anchoring furniture.

The Florida Department of Children and Families didn't comment specifically on the DeLong case, but told CR that its home studies are designed to ensure child safety, such as advising parents to secure "furniture as appropriate, as needed."

Consumer Reports safety experts say that if you have a Hemnes eight-drawer dresser, make sure you anchor it (and any other dresser in your home) securely to the wall. If you don't have the anchors that came with your dresser, you can purchase anti-tip restraints online and at many hardware and big-box stores. Or place the dresser in a room that children can't access. Read more about [furniture safety](#), and [how to anchor furniture to the wall](#).

Crystal Ellis, whose son Camden died in 2014 after an Ikea Malm dresser fell on him, says that families should be able to trust that manufacturers are producing stable furniture, without having to rely on wall anchors.

"We pick out these dressers that match our cribs or the design of our nursery," Ellis said at the recent ASTM meeting. "And we trust you when we go into your store that you're bringing us a product that's going to keep our children safe. We trust that when they go to bed at night and I go to bed in my room, that they're going to be alive in the morning. The expectation is that they're going to be safe."

**Correction:** An earlier version of this article misspelled the first name of a parent whose story is recounted here. She is Meghan DeLong, not Megan DeLong.

## Keeping Kids Safe From Furniture Tip-Overs

A danger might be lurking right in your home. On the 'Consumer 101' TV show, Consumer Reports' expert Peter Anzalone explains to show host Jack Rico what consumers need to know about furniture tip-overs.

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## PRESS RELEASE

# Consumer Reports: Ikea must recall, offer refunds for dangerous dresser model

January 9, 2019

*CR calls for stronger standards, enforcement to protect young children from furniture tip-overs*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Consumer Reports today published a new story in its series about furniture tip-overs in the home and how these preventable incidents can lead to a serious injury or even death, especially among young children. In the story “[Ikea Still Sells a Hemnes Dresser Linked to a Child’s Death](https://www.consumerreports.org/furniture/ikea-still-sells-hemnes-dresser-linked-to-childs-death/) (<https://www.consumerreports.org/furniture/ikea-still-sells-hemnes-dresser-linked-to-childs-death/>),” CR interviews parents and safety experts about the serious risk posed by Ikea’s Hemnes 8-drawer dresser and probes why the company has not recalled the furniture, despite a viral video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtsrlpeMIkE>) of a tip-over incident and a separate incident ([https://www.wfla.com/news/polk-county/lakeland-boy-2-killed-by-dresser-that-fell-on-him\\_20180227114336870/995099730](https://www.wfla.com/news/polk-county/lakeland-boy-2-killed-by-dresser-that-fell-on-him_20180227114336870/995099730)) involving the death of 2-year-old Conner DeLong in Lakeland, Fla., in 2017.

William Wallace, senior policy analyst for Consumer Reports, said:

“The Hemnes 8-drawer dresser has been linked to tip-overs and a child’s death, and there’s no excuse for Ikea’s failure to recall it. Ikea should immediately stop selling the dresser, contact existing owners, and offer them a refund in exchange for getting the dresser out of their homes. If Ikea won’t take this action on its own, the government should intervene.

“Consumer Reports’ investigation also makes clear that the industry’s current voluntary safety standard is too weak to protect children up to and including age five, as intended. Ikea states that the 8-drawer Hemnes dresser passes the voluntary standard’s stability tests, and yet it is linked to tip-over incidents, including Conner DeLong’s death. We urge furniture makers and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to implement a far stronger stability test.

“Separate and apart from Ikea, there are dressers on the market that don’t stay upright when put through basic testing—it’s an open secret that the furniture industry regularly acknowledges. CPSC leaders know that unstable dressers can lead to deadly tip-over incidents, especially when young children are involved, and yet there was not a single recall in 2018. That’s a disgrace. If the Commission doesn’t challenge manufacturers and help get these products off the market, then it’s abdicating its responsibilities, with children’s lives on the line.”

In 2018 CR published the investigative story “[Furniture Tip-Overs: A Hidden Hazard in Your Home](https://www.consumerreports.org/furniture/furniture-tip-overs-hidden-hazard-in-your-home/) (<https://www.consumerreports.org/furniture/furniture-tip-overs-hidden-hazard-in-your-home/>),” which found that the industry’s voluntary standard for tip-overs is inadequate. CR has long advocated for a stronger, mandatory standard for furniture in order to help avoid tip-over injuries and deaths, and it has urged industry to improve its voluntary standard.

CR encourages consumers to secure dressers to walls to help prevent tip-overs—including through our advice in an [article and video](https://www.consumerreports.org/furniture/how-to-anchor-furniture-to-help-prevent-tip-overs/) (<https://www.consumerreports.org/furniture/how-to-anchor-furniture-to-help-prevent-tip-overs/>) that helps consumers know how to anchor furniture—but recognizes that it is not always an option for rental tenants or those who are not handy with tools. CR says that the furniture industry has a responsibility to build safer, more stable dressers, and that safety should not rely on a person’s skill at anchoring a dresser to a wall.

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