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New Berlin girl's accident helps prompt stroller recall

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An accident involving the daughter of a New Berlin family helped prompt Cosco, one of the nation's largest manufacturers of baby products, to issue a recall Wednesday of 57,000 strollers.

Katrine Friis, now 2, broke her arm when she unexpectedly fell onto a busy street from her collapsed Cosco Geoby Two Ways stroller while on a family vacation in Toronto last July.

"We were crossing a busy street on the crosswalk and the stroller collapsed," said Katrine's mother, Gitte Friis. "She was pulled under the stroller and fell onto the crosswalk. We had to quick pull her to the sidewalk."

Saying they wanted to make sure this didn't happen to other Cosco consumers, the Friis family contacted Milwaukee lawyer Jay Urban, who contacted the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. Urban notified the

regulatory agency of the defect in the product, which Cosco had manufactured from February 1997 to February 1998.

On NBC's "Today" show Wednesday morning, commission Chairman Ann Brown announced the Cosco recall and demonstrated to a national television audience how the stroller's locking mechanism failed, leading to Katrine's fall.

During the commission's investigation, it found that the company had received nearly

3,500 complaints about the stroller's performance, about 200 of which concerned injured infants. Also, without notifying consumers, the firm had begun to sell a stronger replacement mechanism that solved the stroller's problem, according to a commission news release.

Cosco, which in 1996 was hit with one of the largest civil penalties in the commission's 26-year history — \$725,000 — in a case involving dangerous toddler bed guardrails, did not re-

turn several telephone calls Wednesday seeking comment.

Gitte Friis, who learned of the company's planned recall last week, said her family was relieved Cosco took action. "Our main reason for contacting (Urban) was to make people aware of this," she said. "We were expecting a recall. That was our highest hope."

For more information on the strollers, call Cosco at (800) 821-6736.