

## Wrap rage: Local expert calls for sanity

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Wow, what would past generations who labored and toiled to build this country say if they heard one of the trials of modern life is overcoming "wrap rage?"

That's right, while other generations have faced depressions and wars, built fleets of ships and landed men on the moon, today -- especially during the holidays -- U.S. families are confronted by the inability to easily and quickly open the stuff they buy.

According to the American Dialect Society, "wrap rage (is) anger brought on by the frustration of trying to open a factory-sealed purchase."

The term was one of the group's most useful for 2007 and Webster Dictionary made it a finalist for word of the year in 2009.

That's not to say that the clam-shell plastic packaging that's inspired this term shouldn't be changed. It should, says expert Peter Clarke, chief executive and founder of Fairfield-based Product Ventures Inc.

Product Ventures designs packages and Clarke will tell you the clam-shell packaging has created a lot of problems. Each year hundreds of thousands of Americans



Peter Clarke, chief executive and founder of Fairfield-based Product Ventures Inc., and his wife Liz know they will be facing 'wrap rage' Christmas morning in helping their 7-year-old daughter, Inga, open gifts.

cut themselves while opening these packages because they are sealed so tight and the plastic is so rigid that you have to use a sharp implement to open them. Cutting the plastic can leave sharp edges that slice fingers and palms.

"It's a joke. It's a circus," he said. For Clarke and his designers, it's also offensive because, he said, "it can be better."

John Cappiello, a Bridgeport Hospital spokesman, was familiar with the danger of the packaging but was unable to hunt down any first-hand accounts from the emergency room of its dangers.

Clarke said the reason the packages are like

this is because big retailers want it that way. The concept behind the clam shell is pretty good, Clarke said. It's clear so people can see what the product is and that it has all its parts and components. That eliminates the need to have a large sales force to show off the item and it means customers won't have to open a box to check inside before buying.

Although having a clear package makes sense, it is unclear why they are made to be nearly impenetrable?

Clarke said he is glad we asked.

He said the idea is to prevent theft by not allowing thieves to open the package and slip the

item in his or her pocket. Of course, creating this type of packaging means the customer can't open it easily either.

Clarke also noted that clamshell packages generally travel well, and because most are for toys and electronics coming from Asia, it makes sense to encase them in it.

"There is hope, though," Clarke said.

Manufacturers of these products don't really like the packaging, he said. They've started to include directions and markings where to open the packages. Some are using perforations, Clarke said. Online retailers also are moving away from this type of packaging, he said. Amazon.com is active in promoting easy-to-open packages, according to Clarke.

But the ultimate hope for improving packaging is in customers' hands, he said. If they start to complain to retailers about the packaging, the retailers may change. Clarke suggested customers ask retailers to open the packages for them at the store. If enough people do so, maybe the retailers will get the message that it shouldn't take a power tool to open these things, Clarke said.