



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

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STATEMENT BY ESRB PRESIDENT PATRICIA VANCE REGARDING THE RELEASE OF THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION REPORT TO CONGRESS ON THE MARKETING OF VIOLENT ENTERTAINMENT TO CHILDREN:

“This year, the ESRB celebrates its 15th anniversary. Despite its relatively short history, the ESRB ratings have come to be regarded as an exemplary model for effective media ratings and industry self-regulation. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Report released today underscores once again that the ESRB rating system is exceptionally effective in terms of informing consumers about game content and age-appropriateness as well as ensuring industry compliance with responsible advertising and marketing practices.

“In recognizing that the ESRB ‘outpaces’ other industries in its efforts and finding ‘a high degree of compliance with the video game industry’s marketing and advertising rules,’ the FTC also commended the ESRB for introducing rating summaries on its website, which go far beyond the level of detail provided by any other industry rating system. Compliance with advertising and marketing requirements was ‘high in all media’ monitored by the FTC, retailers held the line by enforcing their store policies related to the sale of M-rated games, and the video game industry ‘continues to have the strongest self-regulatory code.’

“Retailers sustained an 80% compliance rate with their store policies not to sell Mature-rated games to children since the FTC’s last survey in May 2008, continuing to lead when compared to similar rates of restriction for movies, DVDs and music. Since the FTC’s first mystery shop audits in 2000, video and computer game retailers have increased their compliance rate for sales of M-rated games by 433% and continue to improve consumer education about the rating system by posting signs and, in many cases, running in-store TV PSAs educating customers about the rating system.

“Although this most recent Report was overwhelmingly positive with respect to the ESRB and our rating system, we will continue to work diligently to empower parents with the ability to make informed decisions about the computer and video games they deem appropriate for their families and ensure that those games are marketed responsibly.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FTC REPORT TO CONGRESS:

- “[T]he video game industry outpaces the movie and music industries in the three key areas that the Commission has been studying for the past decade: (1) restricting target-marketing of mature-rated products to children; (2) clearly and prominently disclosing rating information; and (3) restricting children’s access to mature-rated products at retail.”

- “Of the three entertainment sectors, the electronic game industry continues to have the strongest self-regulatory code.” In addition, “...compliance with the ESRB code was high in all media.”
- “The electronic game industry also performed well with respect to prominent disclosure of rating information in ads and retailer websites.”
- “[R]etailers are strongly enforcing age restrictions on the sale of M-rated games, with an average denial rate of 80%.” Also, “video game retailers have implemented a robust system of checking for age ID when unaccompanied children attempt to buy M-rated games.”
- “The Commission found no evidence of M-rated game ads on television programs with a substantial youth audience that aired prior to 10:00 p.m. and a decrease in the number of M-rated game ads on websites highly popular with teens or children.”
- Finally, “Overall, the Commission uncovered little evidence of inappropriate target marketing through the traditional media.”

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About Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

The ESRB is a non-profit, self-regulatory body established in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). ESRB independently assigns computer and video game content ratings, enforces advertising guidelines, and helps ensure responsible online privacy practices for the interactive entertainment software industry.