

18 June 2026

Question 1

Do you agree with the proposal to introduce reformed furniture fire safety sector legislation based on a smoulder test?

Answer Agree

Comments:

1. A smouldering cigarette is the source of ignition in 45-75% of fire fatalities and as such linking fire testing to the single largest cause of ignition is both a logical and proportionate decision of the Government.
2. A cigarette test applies in the EU and in the US and the Government is right to track this.
3. We wish to see all furniture capable of being manufactured without the use of CFR.
4. Currently (under the current 1988 Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations (1988 FFFSR)) we understand that the weight of CFR can be 5-20% of the foam filling and fabric.
5. The CFR in foam are not chemically bound. TCPP, named recently by the World Health Organisation as a probable carcinogen, is volatile. The volatile CFR will “off gas” into the workshop of an upholsterer as the foam is stored or cut or worked on and the levels of exposure are unacceptable from a health and safety perspective to our upholsterers. So we are grateful for this move towards eliminating CFR.
6. The CFR permeate skin, are stored in fat cells, cross the placenta, pass through breast milk, and impact the organ development of an unborn child. CFR have been linked to auto immune diseases, infertility, developmental issues in children and cancer.
7. In the upholstery industry we are seeing a concerning pattern of infertility and auto immune conditions, and whilst we have no evidence to prove the cause is CFR, we are concerned.
8. We are also concerned for our client’s homes, particularly clients who are pregnant or with small children. Small children are disproportionately affected by the CFR exposure as their organs are still developing, their hand to mouth behaviour increases exposure, their small frames mean the same volume of chemical has a much larger effect and their metabolism is not developed to cope with the CFR.
9. We are also concerned by the environmental impact. CFR can be so long lasting (persistent) that they will pass from landfill to waterways to fish to the wildlife and to the food chain and will build in fat cells and pass from generation to generation. DEFRA have recognised this and have insisted that all soft furniture containing POPs be incinerated at 800 degrees. This is costly to upholsterers in disposal, costly to Councils in high temperature incineration and wasteful to resources.
10. We endorse a movement to a cigarette test which aligns us with the EU and US. Our concern is twofold. One, that the slow adoption of standards will delay implementation of the law. Two, that the result of the standards negotiation will be to see an increase in CFR treatment of top fabrics above that seen today under the 1988 FFFSR. We believe it is the intention of the Government to decrease/eliminate CFR so we would be grateful if this concern could be addressed by the Government and not left to a decision in standards negotiation.
11. If compliance with the new law could be demonstrated, from inception, by either compliance with EN1021(1) (composites) or compliance with TB117 (2013) (components) the two problems listed above could be avoided.

12. The Californian furniture flammability standard TB117 (2013) adopted across the US by 16 CFR part 1640 requires that either a top fabric passes the cigarette test or that the furniture contains a fire barrier cloth just below the top fabric. The fire barrier cloth must pass the cigarette test. This provision is needed in the new proposal to allow for cellulosic fabrics to avoid the necessity of CFR treatment.
13. This provision is needed to replace the provision of the current FFFSR where the top fabric is 75% natural and a schedule 3 interliner is used. Across the industry natural fabrics are frequently marketed as “suitable for use with an interliner” irrespective of whether they pass the cigarette test. It would be unfortunate if the result of new legislation was to require CFR treatment of cellulosic fabrics.
14. We would like to see a label applied to furniture “This product does not contain chemical flame retardants” and “this product contains chemical flame retardants” to encourage manufacturers to eliminate CFRs from their products. We appreciate that discussion is needed on how this labelling will inform end of life management of chemicals. We would like fabric suppliers to fully disclose all chemical flame retardant treatments including those in “inherent yarns” where the chemicals are reactively embedded in the yarns.
15. We have observed how “delay” and “doubt” and a helpful willingness to offer more research can be the tactics in objecting to legislative change. The following tactics have been examined in scientific literature

<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.3c04213>

- (A) deliberately challenging independent scientific research, commissioning scientific studies to pick flaws in independent scientific research
- (B) proposing that more impact assessments are required
- (C) creating regulatory paralysis by populating committees, becoming chairs of relevant committees
- (D) claiming confidentiality of protected formulae
- (E) creating front groups or populating trade associations

We see delay as the biggest threat to this new legislation.

16. We must not allow “delay” in BSI setting the Standards. We propose that pending Standards being adopted by BSI, manufacturers be allowed to determine their compliance under GPSR looking to:
 - (A) EN1021 (1) - the EU cigarette test on a composite - for the UK composite test
 - (B) TB117 (2013) - the US cigarette test on a component - for the UK component test

By allowing compliance with these two standards we will achieve clarity for business on the date when change is to be effective, we will not allow delay to undermine the new law and we will not see an increase in CFR use in top fabric.

Question 2

Do you agree with the proposal to allow businesses to use composite/representative sample testing or component testing to demonstrate compliance with the new regulations?

Answer Agree

Comment

1. The US in TB117 (2013) use a component test (cigarette test) where:
 - (A) the fabric is tested over a standard foam

- (B) the foam is tested under a standard fabric
- (C) and if (A) or (B) fails then that failed fabric or filling is still allowed to be used provided a fire barrier cloth (non CFR) is placed immediately under the top fabric

This US test is a sensible component test and has not seen an increase in furniture related fire deaths since 2013.

2. The EU in EN1021 (1) use a composite test (cigarette test) where a small mock up is made of a sofa comprising fabric and all layers of filling.

This EU test is a sensible composite test. According to Our World in Data based at the University of Oxford, fire deaths in the EU have fallen at the same rate as ours in the UK.

3. The benefit of having both a composite and a component test are:

- (A) It will increase overall compliance with the new fire regulations. (Having the composite test alone would present disproportionate testing costs on smaller manufacturers such as bespoke manufacturers and thereby risk non compliance).
- (B) The component industry (fabrics, fillings) should be mandated to cigarette test their products and publish these test results. (Currently many fabrics are offered for sale “as upholstery fabrics” to upholsterers but without any test certificates).
- (C) It supports innovation. Some products may fail fire testing as a component, but when combined with other products the composite may be fire safe eg placing needled wool on top of loose coir. It is important that the flexibility to choose a component or composite route is open to the manufacturer to allow innovation.
- (D) It reflects the current furniture market where a consumer can be offered a choice of 80 fabrics, 12 arm options, different seat fillings etc and every sofa ends up being almost bespoke.

4. If we take away the component route to compliance we risk seeing inexperienced companies leaning again on CFR to pass the test because they do not have the resources or expertise to undertake composite fire testing to invest in discovering a CFR free way forward.

5. Delay is the risk to this route as BSI has yet to develop standards to support this composite/ component option. This risk of BSI delay presents problems for manufacturers, upholsterers, the general public and the environment who will all continue to be submitted to the toxicity of CFR long after the new legislation comes into force.

This problem could be avoided by allowing the terms of following standards to be respected as soon as the legislation comes into force

- (A) TB117 (2013) for the component test; and
- (B) EN1021-1 for the composite test.

Question 3

Do you agree with the proposal to use the General Product Safety Regulations to regulate re-upholstery and repair of upholstered furniture?

Answer Agree

Comments:

1. Upholsterers in the UK represent an important industry in the support of repair, recycling and the circular economy. We are largely one man/woman bands without back office support.
2. Applying detailed regulations that are aimed predominantly at manufacturers to such small businesses lacks proportionality and imposes an unmanageable weight on a small business.

3. We are not aware of any other repair businesses that are legislatively regulated as if they were a large manufacturer.
4. We understand that the General Product Safety Regulations impose a duty on us to ensure that the furniture will be safe in normal use - chemical safety - fire safety - build safety will all be considered.
5. We are not aware that items upholstered by upholsterers in the UK in the past have lead to fire fatalities. On the contrary we believe that items created by upholsters with the design eye of the client, tend to be treasured and looked after.

Question 4

Do you agree with the proposal to use the General Product Safety Regulations to regulate second hand upholstered furniture?

Answer Agree

Comments:

1. With a need to observe the circular economy we do not see that the disposal to landfill or incineration of all second hand upholstered furniture that is missing a fire label is prudent or proportionate.
2. We have seen that valuable heritage items of 1950s and 1960s design are being stripped back to their bare frames in order to be sold at auction or destroyed.