**British Furniture Confederation and the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations**

A revision of the UK’s Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations (FFFSRs) is now long overdue. The consultation process has been lengthy due, in part, to the differing views of a broad church of stakeholders. Contrary to some press articles the UK furniture industry is fully supportive of new regulation and, through the British Furniture Confederation (BFC) has invested significant resource to this effect.

Consensus is clearly key to the success of any revision and the BFC’s manifesto reinforces the importance of producing meaningful regulations that are both practical and enforceable, but above all prioritise consumer safety.

As stated in the introduction, various consultations have elicited many opinions and this document’s purpose is to openly clarify the BFC’s position over the development period in the hope that it will help to move the agenda forwards, concluding in regulation that is acceptable to the large majority of stakeholders.

* Since its inception the British Furniture Confederation has supported the UK’s FFFSR and has campaigned to have the regulations revised and improved to remove areas of uncertainty, and to reflect developments in materials and manufacturing techniques.
* In the absence of a revision, two fire safety guides were commissioned for both the domestic and contract market sectors1,2, explaining the obligations of importers, manufacturers and retailers, as well as offering advice on areas of uncertainty that still remain enshrined within the current regulations
* The FFFSRs, combined with the increase in the use of smoke alarms and reduction in smoking in the home, have been instrumental in driving down the number of deaths in house fires by slowing down the rate of escalation of fires and increasing the time home dwellers have to exit a building. This view is supported by two Government reports3,4 and a recent report by the Federation of the European Union Fire Officers Associations5.
* The BFC has been actively involved in the various initiatives undertaken by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and its predecessors, to revise the FFFSR, contributing to all consultations, pre-consultation meetings and technical meetings, as it is committed to ensuring the UK has the best fire safety legislation in the world.
* It is essential that furniture and mattresses sold in the UK protect consumers, both through fire safety and through removing, or reducing chemicals, that may be harmful to health or the environment. As such the BFC is committed to supporting both the FFFSRs and the EU REACH**6** Regulations.
* Initiatives to raise fire safety standards across Europe to a level equivalent to the UK are supported, such as those proposed by the Federation of the European Union Fire Officers Associations5.
* Successful implementation of the FFFSRs is dependent on enforcement. BEIS is urged to adequately fund Trading Standards to ensure this takes place. Recent targeted investigations by BEIS/Trading Standards have identified significant levels of non-compliance which reinforces the need both for applicable regulations and for an adequately resourced enforcement agency.
* The National Bed Federation, the Leisure and Outdoor Furniture Association, the British Furniture Manufacturers and the Furniture Industry Research Association sit on the BFC Executive and have introduced, or are introducing, audited code of conduct schemes requiring that the furniture industry has systems in place to demonstrate compliance with the FFFSRs. These involve collaboration with Trading Standards to best reduce their burden of enforcement.
* The BEIS initiative to fully revise the FFFSRs was fully welcomed. However, research by Executive member Associations indicated that proposed changes would likely not have the desired effect of reducing the amount of fire retardant chemicals being used and result in more variability in test results, which would be detrimental both in terms of manufacture and enforcement.
* An alternative, interim solution to amend the regulations7, has been proposed and circulated to key stakeholders. This has the full support of the BFC’s member associations and the British Retail Consortium. This proposal would allow for a reduction in levels of fire retardants in some fabrics without affecting fire safety. It would result in immediate meaningful, enforceable regulation, enabling industry to focus on the development of solutions that maintain fire safety yet reduce the need for potentially hazardous chemical treatments.
* Certainty is essential if the UK furniture industry is to flourish, which places an onus on BEIS to confirm the future of the FFFSRs, including a target date for publication. The BFC will continue to collaborate to this effect and is fully supportive of any further research required to ensure consistency in test results and the implementation of robust set of regulations, although time is now of the essence.

1. BFC (2009). Fire safety of furniture and furnishings in the home. A guide to the UK Regulations. Prepared by the Furniture Industry Research Association, 2009 updated 2011.

<http://britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk/wp-contentBFC-Flammability-Guide-pdf.pdf>

1. BFC (2009). Fire safety of furniture and furnishings in the contract and non-domestic sector. A guide to UK requirements. Prepared by the Furniture Industry Research Association, 2010, updated 2011.

<http://britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BFC-Contract-flammability-guide.pdf>

1. DTI (2006). Effectiveness of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. Prepared by the University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, 2006.
2. DTI (2009). A statistical report to assess the effectiveness of the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. Prepared by Greenstreet Berman, 2009.

<http://britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Bermann-Greenstreet-Report-on-effectiveness-of-FR-regulations-2009.pdf>

1. FEU (2017). Fire safety of upholstered furniture and mattresses in the domestic area. European fire services recommendations on test methods.

<https://www.ifv.nl/kennisplein/Documents/20170501-FEU-Fire-safety-of-upholstered-furniture-and-mattresses-in-the-domestic-area.pdf>

1. Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restriction of Chemicals 2007 as amended.

<https://www.echa.europa.eu/web/guest/regulations/reach/understanding-reach>

1. BFC (2017). BFC Proposal for Updating the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended.

<http://britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk/campaigns/current-campaigns/furniture-furnishings-fire-safety/>