

Report to the American Home
Furnishings Alliance on:
"Bonded Leather"

Memo

To: **American Home Furnishings Alliance**

From:

1. Kenneth Kocheckian – Universal Leather
2. Bill Reichel - Flexsteel
3. Mr. Cross – Ashley Furniture
4. Jack Arthur – Norwalk Furniture
5. Joel Beckom – Leather Master

CC:

Bill Purdue – President AHFA

Patt Iott – Chair Person, Leather Standards Committee

Dr. Nicholas J. Cory – Director, Leather Laboratory at the University of Cincinnati

Date: 6/30/2008

Re: Bonded Leather

AHFA Leather Standards Committee discussion on Bonded Leather
Committee

Committee Commission:

1. **Definition of Bonded Leather**
2. **The legality and possible subsequent liability of promoting Bonded Leather so that the public's perception of this product is one of a genuine all leather product.**
3. **The ethics of promoting this product as genuine leather.**
4. **Safety standards of Bonded Leather**
5. **The responsibility of the AHFA's committee on Leather Standards to voice a public opinion.**

The committee wishes to express its sincere gratitude to Dr. Nicholas J. Cory, Director of the Leather Laboratory at the University of Cincinnati without whose help none of the technical responses below would be possible.

1) **Definition:**

a) International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies. (IULTCS)

(IULTCS Testing Commissions provides **PROTECTION** for the leather tanning industry worldwide by the provision of properly formulated test methods that are totally relevant to leather manufacture and leather usage.

Without the work of the **IU Commissions** which develop these test methods, the leather industry would be open to spurious test methods devised by outside manufacturers trying to force performance standards on leather which bear no relationship to the reality of working with leather.

The **IULTCS** test methods are recognized by the International Organization for Standardization (**ISO**) and many of the **IU** methods are adopted by **ISO** as international standards.)

1) Leather board	2) More or less thick and flexible sheet material, composed mainly, if not entirely, of ground or disintegrated leather, held together with a suitable binder, such as rubber latex. Leather board is not leather. 3) If tanned hide or skin is disintegrated mechanically and/or chemically into fibrous particles, small pieces or powder and then, with or without the combination of a binding agent, is made into sheets or other forms, such sheets or forms are not leather. 4) Leather board is sometimes, mistakenly, referred to as "bonded" or "composition" leather, but none of these are leather.
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b) Leather Industries of America ("LIA") has adopted the following definition, which it formally submitted to the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC") for its consideration and ruling on July 23, 2007: (submitted in response to FTC's request for comments on the existing "Guides for Select Leather and Imitation Leather Products" at 16 CFR Part 24, the FTC has still not published any response in the Federal Register)

- i) "Bonded leather is made by forming leather fragments and fibers into a single homogenous sheet or roll with the aid of adhesives, resins or similar bonding agents."
- ii) Bonded leather is manufactured in a process that is very similar to paper-making, using very similar – if not identical – machinery. A homogenous, well-mixed "pulp" of leather fibers and fragments mixed with cellulose and/or other fillers suspended in latex or another binder is poured onto a conveyor to form a long strip, which is then passed under drying equipment to drive off the moisture and form a thick roll of material.

2) **The Legality and possible subsequent liability of promoting Bonded Leather so that the public's perception of this product is one of a genuine all leather product.**

a) The Committee consensus was this question is best answered by professional attorneys.

3) **The Ethics of promoting this product as genuine leather.**

- a) The committee consensus was that this question is best answered by the above LIA defined production technique of Bonded Leather and that production techniques obvious result.
 - i) After the application of Bonded Leather on furniture the purchaser can never touch any leather particles used in the production technique. Thus the title of Bonded Leather is erroneous and miss leading to the purchaser.

4. **Safety Standards of Bonded Leather.**

- a. Bonded leather, as defined above, is likely to contain and emit LESS formaldehyde than genuine leather. This is because formaldehyde is primarily attributable to synthetic retanning agents that are applied to leather during post-tanning operations, but which are not present in the partly processed leather (wet blue) used to manufacture bonded leather. However, this is only a prediction, subject to confirmation through chemical testing.
- b. **Other potentially Hazardous Chemicals that may be found in Bonded Leather like Lead and Cadmium.**
 - i. The incidence of lead in furniture upholstery leather is attributable to the intentional use of lead-based pigments, formulated into the finish to provide the desired color and performance at a competitive price-point. Since bonded leather is coated using finish formulations that are almost identical to those applied to genuine leather, bonded leather is equally likely to contain lead.
- c. **Are there recommendations on a specific production method that best represents what truly can be called Bonded Leather?**
 - i. The committee feels that unless one can touch Genuine leather in its original form then the product is not leather

5. **The responsibility of the AHFA's committee on Leather Standards to voice a public opinion.**

- 1. The committee feels that a web page clarifying AHFA's definition of bonded leather would serve to educate the readers, reducing the level of confusion within the industry, and thereby potentially or hopefully reducing the incidence of unintentionally deceptive product marketing.