



Upholstered Furniture Flammability Fact Sheet

The American Home Furnishings Alliance supports a flexible, reasonable national furniture flammability standard that would provide meaningful safety benefits for Americans while preserving the design, comfort and affordability of upholstered furniture.

Residential Fire Facts

- In 2002, the most recent year for which the Consumer Product Safety Commission has reported statistics, there were 369,000 residential fires resulting in 2,270 deaths and 12,870 injuries. Property loss due to these fires was \$5.32 billion.
- When the origin of the fire could be identified, it was most frequently cooking equipment – which accounted for about a third of the fires – followed by heating and cooling equipment (14%), electrical distribution systems (e.g., wiring or lighting, at 11%), and cigarettes or other tobacco products (5%).
- Smoking materials were involved in about 25% of 2002 fire deaths.
- In 20% of the fire deaths in 2002, upholstered furniture was the first item ignited in the fire. In another 19% of fire deaths, a mattress or bedding was the first item ignited.

Residential Furniture Fires

- The Upholstered Furniture Action Council effectively addresses the primary ignition source of upholstered furniture fires: cigarettes. Furniture manufactured according to the voluntary UFAC standard is constructed to resist ignition from cigarettes.
- Over the past 20 years, the incidence of upholstered furniture fires in the United States has been reduced by more than 85% due to: manufacturers' compliance with the voluntary UFAC standard; declines in smoking prevalence; and increased use of residential smoke detectors.
- AHFA recommends that the CPSC adopt the UFAC standard and mandate that all furniture sold in the United States comply with this proven and effective standard.
- Efforts at the CPSC have focused on making furniture resistant to matches, lighters and candles, or "small open flame sources." As a cause of fire deaths, these sources trail significantly behind cigarettes. In 2002, lighters were responsible for 4% of fire deaths; candles 5.7%, and matches 1.5%.
- After 14 years of studying the open flame ignition issue, the CPSC introduced a draft national furniture flammability standard in 2006. An independent review found that costs of the proposed measure would exceed benefits by at least \$145 million annually.

Environmental Concerns

- Solutions currently being considered to address residential fires caused by small open flames involve the use of flame retardant chemicals. However, these chemical compounds – used to treat both fabrics and cushioning materials in upholstered products – have come under increasing scrutiny as carcinogens and environmental toxins. These chemicals have been banned in Europe. California has begun phasing them out of use, and other states are considering similar measures.
- AHFA is currently working with the Environmental Protection Agency's "Design for the Environment" division to evaluate emerging replacements to these suspect flame retardant chemicals.
- AHFA believes American consumers understand the risks associated with exposing objects in their homes to an open flame. They do not understand the potential risks associated with chemical exposure from lying on a flame retardant-treated sofa.
- Deaths, injuries and property loss due to residential furniture fires are tragic. AHFA is committed to the long range nature of the research into environmentally sound solutions to fire safety and will remain engaged with EPA in this effort.