

Designers Guidelines for Fire Regulations

Introduction

The UK has some of the most stringent regulations regarding the fire properties of upholstered furniture and the different regulations, schedules and standards can sometimes appear confusing. What follows is not an authoritative interpretation of the Regulations, which is a matter for the courts, and in all situations where you have doubt it is recommended to contact a professional body.

The general guidelines are as follows;

- All foams and fillings for upholstered furniture have to pass the relevant ignitability tests, there are no exceptions for this.
- All Outer Covers have to be inherently match resistant, unless they are more than 75% composed of cotton, viscose, modal, flax, silk or wool (or a combination) in which case they need to be either flameproofed (not suitable for all materials) or used with a Schedule 3 Interliner.
- The tests that are applicable vary widely between different interior applications and are different between Domestic Use, and Contract Upholstery. Special applications such as Aircraft and Yacht Interiors also have their own tests.
- Ben Whistler furniture will have labels that comply with fire regulations.
- Imported furniture must have documented proof of compliance to UK law.

Ben Whistler Fillings

Natural products such as feather, down, hair etc. are inherently fire resistant and pass Schedule 2 Part 1 of the Fire Regulations. Ben Whistler only uses CMHR foam (Combustion Modified High Resilience) as this passes the appropriate tests.

Flameproofing

For Fabrics that are not inherently match proof (i.e. they do not pass Schedule 5, Part 1 of the Regulations) and are more than 75% composed of cotton, viscose, modal, flax, silk or wool flameproofing is an option. This is performed by the application of suitable chemicals by approved centres. The downside of this treatment is that some fabrics, such as silks and embossed velvets can be damaged by this treatment – advice on this can be given by the fabric houses and specialist flameproofers.

For Domestic Upholstery the treated fabric has to comply with the tests in BS5852 Part 1, and BS5651 and for Contract Upholstery it is BS5852 Part2 and BS5651. Contract furniture also has different tests depending on the intended destination.

Interliners

A concession was made to allow the use of the fabrics mentioned above in an untreated form, as long as they are used in conjunction with what is known as a Schedule 3 Interliner. This is a fabric barrier that passed the stringent Schedule 3 of the regulation. However the regulations still require domestic upholstery to be cigarette resistant whether an interliner is used or not.



Useful Contacts

BIDA – British Interior Design Association – 020 7349 0800

Essex Flameproofing – 01708 851885, www.essexflameproofing.co.uk

FIRA, Furniture Industry Research Association – 01438 777700 www.fira.co.uk