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trading standards law explained

New upholstered furniture: fire safety

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

Upholstered furniture is subject to stringent safety standards. The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988* cover the flammability of upholstered furniture (which includes beds, sofa beds, cushions and mattresses). Both new and used furniture has to comply.

[*These Regulations were amended in October 2025 by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.]

There are four basic requirements that manufacturers of upholstered furniture must meet:

- filling materials must meet specified ignition requirements
- upholstery composites must be cigarette resistant
- covers must be match resistant (or may in some cases use a match-resistant interliner)
- a permanent label must be fitted to every item (except mattresses and bed-bases)

The seller is responsible for ensuring that upholstered furniture is labelled correctly when it is sold.

Upholstered furniture

The definition of upholstered furniture includes:

- upholstered seating, including chairs, settees, padded stools and ottomans, foot stools, sofa-beds, futons (and other convertibles), children's furniture, bean bags and floor cushions
- domestic upholstered furniture supplied in kit form for self-assembly
- upholstered head-boards, footboards and side rails of beds
- furniture for use in the open air (garden and outdoor furniture) suitable for use in a dwelling, upholstery in caravans (not vehicles or boats) and cane furniture that includes upholstery
- divans, bed-bases, mattresses, pillows and mattress pads (toppers) (filling material only)
- scatter cushions and seat pads (filling material only)
- permanent covers for furniture (textiles, leather, etc), loose / stretch covers for furniture and covers for non-visible parts of furniture
- foam and non-foam filling material for furniture

Suppliers affected by the Regulations

The Regulations apply to those:

- in the business supply chain, from the supply of materials for use in furniture through to the supply of the finished article
- who supply filling materials and fabrics to the furniture industry or direct to consumers
- who supply re-upholstery and re-covering services
- who hire out furniture in the course of a business. This includes furniture included in accommodation that is let in the course of business (holiday homes and residential furnished lettings), which means that the Regulations apply to landlords, estate agents and letting agents

General testing requirements

Manufacturers, importers and retailers must ensure that:

- furniture containing foam fillings meets the requirements in Schedule 1 to the Regulations
- furniture containing non-foam fillings meets the requirements in Schedule 2 to the Regulations
- composite fillings of more than one filling material comply, either by each individual filling separately complying or by the total composite being tested. Any foam incorporated in the composite must comply with Schedule 1 to the Regulations
- furniture containing upholstery composites passes the cigarette test in Schedule 4 to the Regulations
- furniture supplied with permanent, loose or stretch covers passes the match test in Schedule 5 to the Regulations

To determine whether furniture complies with the Regulations, it will require testing to the specified standards in the Regulations. This responsibility rests with the first supplier in the UK, which is either the manufacturer or the importer.

It is best practice that these tests be part of an ongoing testing regime, ensuring continuing compliance.

Where furniture has been imported or supplied by a third party, it is important to establish that certificates

supplied are valid. There must be a guaranteed system of traceability showing conformance, which may be difficult if relying solely on overseas test certificates. The certificates must also be in date and valid, which is only possible if the documentation provided comes from an accredited laboratory.

Any filling or covering material supplied to be incorporated into furniture must have associated test certificates that show evidence of compliance. This must be traceable through the manufacturing process to the final finished products. In this case, certificates must be provided as an ongoing process, along with the supply of new materials.

Frequency of testing is not set out in the Regulations, as the appropriate frequency will depend on factors such as the amount of the product produced. A risk assessment can help to calculate a reasonable testing frequency.

It is recommended that suppliers are clearly requested to notify purchasers of proposed changes to the materials, quality and composition of products. It is best practice for this to include a requirement to provide new certificates where there are substantive changes to the product specification.

Retailers are not responsible for testing upholstered products (unless they are also the importer), but they are obliged to ensure that the products they sell are safe.

Trading Standards officers will be looking for test certificates from accredited laboratories that show traceability, and are relevant to the product manufactured or imported and placed on the market. The documentation regarding quality assurance and traceability must be readily available to them on request.

Labelling requirements

Permanent labelling

The first supplier of the furniture in the UK is responsible for ensuring that the finished product carries the permanent label, which must be:

- durable
- securely attached to an external surface of the furniture
- on each piece of furniture sold as a collection of items - for example, three-piece suites
- on loose and stretch covers for furniture

It may be incorporated into other labels (such as care labels). This is not required on mattresses, divans and bed bases, which are covered separately in British Standard BS 7177: *Specification for resistance to ignition of mattresses, mattress pads, divans and bed bases*.

There are two types of permanent label that manufacturers and importers can choose from. These are:

- a label giving full information about the furniture
- a shorter label giving the minimum information about the furniture

Full label:

CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE *(a)*

A N Other Ltd AB1 2XY *(b)*

AB 1234 *(c)*

1 March 2020 *(d)*

This article contains CM Foam which passes the specified test. All upholstery is cigarette resistant. *(e)*

All cover fabric is cotton and is match resistant. *(f)*

This article does not include a Schedule 3 interliner. *(h)*

Short label:

CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE *(a)*

Batch/ID No 0F 1234 *(c)*

To comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations:

This article does not include a Schedule 3 interliner. *(h)*

All foams, fillings and composites have been tested to ensure compliance with the relevant ignitability test. All covers and fillings have been tested to ensure that they are cigarette resistant. All covers have been tested to ensure that they are match resistant. *(g)*

Further details are available from your retailer.

(a) the caution
(b) name and postcode of the first supplier in the UK
(c) batch or identification number
(d) date manufactured or imported
(e) description of filling material(s)
(f) description of covering material(s)
(g) a summary of the measures taken to ensure compliance with the Regulations
(h) whether the item contains a fire-resistant interliner

A full description of what must be included in these labels is given in Parts 2 and 3 of Schedule 7 to the Regulations.

Retailers of new upholstered furniture are responsible for ensuring that permanent labels are on and securely attached to items they supply.

The labelling provides relevant information to Trading Standards officers to show compliance and enable cross-checking of the claims made on the label with the manufacturer's records.

Records

All manufacturers, importers and retailers are required to keep records (such as invoices) to ensure traceability of items of upholstered furniture. Manufacturers must also keep records to ensure that materials used in the manufacture of particular batches of furniture are traceable.

The information would include:

- statements from suppliers
- results of any relevant tests that have been carried out on the furniture and its components
- the traceability of the test results to specific items of furniture, linking the tests to the models with the variety of covers used
- the traceability of records to labels, batch numbers or marks attached to the furniture

Manufacturers and importers need to retain the information as is necessary to be able to trace and re-work, withdraw from the market, or recall furniture that is found not to meet the necessary safety requirements.

Inspection of information

Trading Standards officers have powers to inspect products and related documents.

Any person who supplies furniture (or loose covers or stretch covers) must make the name and address of their supplier available to a Trading Standards officer, on request.

General product safety

These Regulations require producers to only place safe items on the market. Compliance with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 means that the furniture is deemed safe in respect of its flammability, but other hazards must still be addressed under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005.

There are further obligations imposed on 'producers' (which includes manufacturers and importers); they must:

- adopt measures to be informed of the risks that might be posed by products they have supplied, which includes:
    - considering sampling products on the market
    - investigating complaints
    - informing distributors of risks
- take appropriate action, which includes:
    - withdrawal
    - recall
    - adequately and effectively warning consumers
    - where producers know that a product poses risks to the consumer, notifying an enforcement authority in writing of this, as well as the action that has been taken to prevent risk to the consumer

Further information

Detailed guidance from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (a predecessor of the Department for Business and Trade) can be found in the *Guide to the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations*.

There is also specific guidance on the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025, which has been issued by the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

Updated to cover the changes made by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. The requirement for display labelling has been removed, and pushchairs, carry cots, baby walkers, etc no longer fall under the definition of upholstered furniture.

Last reviewed / updated: October 2025

Key legislation

- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988
- General Product Safety Regulations 2005
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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