Legislation - Furniture and Furnishings

Upholstered furniture (whether new or second hand) must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, the full details of which can be found here.

The Regulations apply to the following:

* all types of upholstered seating, including chairs, settees, padded stools, pouffes, sofa beds, padded headboards
* children's furniture, cots, carrycots, playpens, prams, pushchairs, high chairs
* garden furniture suitable for indoor use
* furniture in caravans
* mattresses, padded bed bases
* scatter cushions, pillows

Furniture and upholstery not covered by the regulations include:

* sleeping bags
* bed-covers (including duvets)
* loose covers for mattresses
* pillowcases
* curtains
* carpets
* antique furniture
* furniture made before 1950

 The regulations stipulate that:

* the upholstery must pass a specified cigarette test for flammability (not required for mattresses, bed bases, pillows and cushions)
* the filling must pass a specified ignitability test. There are some exemptions (such as filling materials for cushions and pillows) where the cover passes certain ignitability tests
* furniture with permanent covers (excluding mattresses, bed bases and insulated bags designed for carrying babies under six months) must pass specified match tests. In the case of certain natural fibre covers, if there is an interliner between the furniture and the cover, and the interliner passes specified ignition resistance tests, the cover itself need not pass the match test

**How to tell whether furniture complies**

The best way to check whether your furniture complies is to look for a permanent label headed 'CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE' that provides at least the following information:

* a batch number or identification number
* an indication as to whether the article of furniture includes an interliner (as described above)
* a summary of the measures that have been taken to ensure compliance with the Regulations

Permanent labels are usually sewn or stapled to the furniture and they can usually be found either under the main seat cushion or on the base of the furniture.

Mattresses and bed bases are not required to bear this type of label. However, compliance with the ignitability tests may be shown by a label stating compliance with British Standard BS 7177: Specification for resistance to ignition of mattresses, mattress pads, divans and bed bases. This label has a blue border with white lettering and black cigarette and flame symbols.

 If in any doubt, it is recommended to check with Trading Standards as anyone not complying can be fined or even imprisoned.

