



NEWS

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Polyurethane Foam Association Modifies Position on Open Flame Standard *Action taken in response to proposed California Furniture Safety and Fire Prevention Act*

Knoxville, TN March 20, 2007 -- The members of the Polyurethane Foam Association (PFA), long time supporters of a national, performance-based small open flame standard for upholstered furniture, have modified their position in light of the California Furniture Safety and Fire Prevention Act introduced to the California legislature by Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco, 13th District). The bill, introduced last month, calls for the elimination of brominated and chlorinated fire retardants used in the production of foam.

“Brominated and chlorinated fire retardants comprise about 90% to 95% of the foam industry's typical fire retardant usage. If necessary, we can eliminate these materials from foam, but the industry needs a transition period for research and development. It would be helpful if the California small open flame requirement in its TB117 flammability standard for resilient filling materials could be temporarily suspended during the transition period,” explained Bobby Bush, President of the Polyurethane Foam Association. “The cigarette smolder portion of the test should remain in place.”

Bush went on to explain that members of PFA make compliance with standards a priority. They take pride in their record of responsible environmental performance and concern for community health. In fact, PFA manufacturing members phased out CFCs well before the deadline set by the Montreal Protocol. They also phased out use of methylene chloride and comply with the Clean Air Act, national and state-by-state emission standards and continuously invest in research and development to create new systems and processes to assure product safety. As recently as 2004, Association members moved post haste to discontinue use of penta-BDE fire retardants when health concerns were raised.

Bush explained temporarily suspending the California small open flame requirement for furniture filling materials would give the industry much needed time to learn more about the safety and performance standards of alternative fire retardant technology. “A careful and prudent approach now, will help us create a safer, longer-lasting solution,” Bush said.

The official position statement of the PFA follows:

Position Statement on Small Open Flame Testing of Upholstered Furniture Foams

The Polyurethane Foam Association (PFA) has been a long time supporter of a national, performance-based small open flame standard for upholstered furniture. To be effective, a standard must 1) be based on the composite performance of the finished piece including all items of assembly, 2) be appropriate to the risk of small open flame ignition, 3) be free from bias toward any component, and 4) be reproducible and technically feasible.

Combustion modification technologies used to produce flexible polyurethane foam to help furniture manufacturers meet such a standard must be safe for workers, the public and the environment, and be economically feasible. Technologies must also be compatible with available foam production methods.

Because of recent questions about the viability of available combustion modification technologies, PFA recommends temporarily suspending requirements for a small open flame standard until those questions have been resolved. PFA also recommends the enactment of a national furniture standard based on smoldering cigarette ignition, identical or similar to that administered by the Upholstered Furniture Action Council; and that research continue toward the development of an open flame standard built around the availability of safe, economical combustion modification technologies to be implemented when and if those conditions are satisfied.

The Polyurethane Foam Association is a trade association founded in 1980 to educate customers and other groups about flexible polyurethane foam (FPF). This includes providing facts on environmental, health and safety issues and technical information on the performance of FPF in consumer and industrial products. FPF is used as a key comfort component in most upholstered furniture and mattress products and it plays an important fire safety role by helping to reduce smoldering ignition. PFA has been heavily involved in consumer fire safety education and also provides information to users of FPF regarding safe handling and storage procedures.

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