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## **Statement on Upholstered Furniture and Fillings Flammability**

The Polyurethane Foam Association (PFA) represents United States manufacturers of flexible polyurethane foam (FPF). Foam is often used in manufacturing upholstered furniture to provide lasting comfort and seating support.

A room fire usually involves many combustible home furnishing items. The foam component inside a sofa or chair is rarely the first thing to ignite. Because of the number and variety of combustible materials that may be involved in a fire, and unique room configurations, it is almost impossible to simulate real fire conditions in a laboratory test. As an example, the rate of flame spread is greatly affected by fire conditions and that's hard to duplicate in a laboratory. For that reason, we see an advantage for a flammability standard that addresses ignition resistance, rather than one that focuses on just slowing the burning process.

PFA is a strong supporter of the Consumer Product Safety Commission's effort to develop an effective national flammability standard for upholstered furniture. The goal of the CPSC approach is to reduce small open flame ignitions, like when a candle is accidentally tipped over, or a match or disposable lighter is deliberately used to attempt to start a fire. The CPSC also will require that products resist smoldering ignition such as from lit cigarettes and other smoking materials. Large reductions in cigarette-caused fires have occurred since 1980, yet smoldering ignition remains the most common cause of household fires involving upholstered furniture.

PFA members have been researching and improving the combustion characteristics of FPF cushion components since the late 1960's to reduce the burning properties of furniture. We learned that there is no way to completely protect a sofa or chair from accidental or deliberate ignition. But, certain precautions can be taken to help make products more difficult to ignite and possibly slower to burn.

Today, as work progresses to establish a national flammability standard, PFA members are helping furniture manufacturers achieve the combustion performance required for their upholstered products by offering numerous combustion modified components that can be used in furniture construction.

While having a national flammability standard may add a measure of safety, it must be remembered that despite having a standard in place, there will still be fires involving furniture. Even combustion modified cushioning components such as fabric, fiberfill, feathers and foam have the potential to burn if exposed to enough heat and a source of ignition. The best protection, and first line of defense, should be to practice responsible fire prevention in the home. Families can help prevent household fires by keeping burning cigarettes away from sofas and chairs. Keep matches, lighters and candles away from children. Install smoke detectors and test them often.

One of the most dangerous things that could happen is that the consuming public develops a false sense of security if they see labels on upholstered furniture that would indicate that the components in the furniture are fire resistant.