

Fire Retardants - Friend or Foe?



It is the responsibility for UK hotels to ensure that furniture and mattresses meet the UK Fire Regulations up to contract standard otherwise known as CRIB 5. Whereas a retailer who sells to a customer is responsible for meeting the Fire Regulations, it is solely the hoteliers' responsibility to make sure that the product they are buying meets the higher Contract regulations.

Furniture and mattress covering fabrics, such as cotton and polyester, must be back-coated with Fire Retardant (FR) chemicals to meet the UK Fire Regulations. Fillings such as foam also must be chemically treated with FR's and amazingly up to 15% of the foam's weight is in fact FR chemicals!

First introduced to the UK from the US in 1988, many of these chemicals are now banned or restricted in Europe, the US and Canada due to a myriad of health and environmental concerns. The UK is the only country continuing to use these chemicals in vast amounts in domestic and even more in contract furniture.

Health & Environmental Issues

Many of the FR chemicals commonly used in furniture are associated with adverse health impacts including hyperactivity, poorer neurodevelopment and lower IQ, hormone disruption, fertility problems and cancer (including thyroid and breast cancer). FR's are also endocrine disruptors and low-dose exposures can lead to significant and irreversible health effects, including neurobehavioral and cognitive changes.

These chemicals migrate out of products over time into air, dust and waterways. A mattress or sofa is basically just a giant bellows blowing the FR dust into the environment, where it can be breathed in or under certain conditions absorbed through the skin.

How does this affect the UK hotel industry?

A most pressing problem for the hotel industry will be the disposal of FR treated furniture. As a signatory to the Stockholm Convention, many of these FR's will not be able to be disposed of in UK landfill sites as they are classed as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP's). Furniture and mattresses containing these chemicals will have to be disposed by high temperature incinerators of which the governments admit, they have very few. This will incur an additional charge.

Passionate about finding a natural solution, we have developed a world's first, completely unique, natural alternative to the FR chemicals using only organic cotton and wool (method patent pending). Whilst wool-only mattresses are available they tend to be very expensive and produce a prickly surface. Cottonsafe® Hotel are the only completely natural luxury mattresses with a cotton ticking which passes all the regulations right up to contract level without any chemicals at all. Cottonsafe® fire protection also lasts for the life of the fabric and has none of the disposal, health or environmental problems.



COTTONSAFE®

This mattress contains NO Flame-Retardant chemicals and can be safely recycled.



NOTICE

The materials in and on this mattress:

Contain NO flame retardant chemicals or POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants)

Cottonsafe® fabric conforms to BS 7177:2008 without ANY flame retardant chemicals.



What should hotels do?

Whilst the cost of replacing hotel furniture is already high, the additional cost of disposal will need to be factored in. Although there are many mattresses using natural fillings, most use FR chemicals to meet the safety standards. Green hoteliers must be diligent in ensuring that the mattresses and sofas they purchase are not only safe, but that they are free from FR chemicals and recyclable. Look out for our labels which state that our unique mattresses conform to the Stockholm Convention.