

From the 1st of January 2015 another new provision for manufacturers of domestic upholstered furniture came into force in California. Apart from the obligation to provide upholstered furniture in accordance with TB 117-2013 (see CATAS News n. 2 and 3 of 2014), the manufacturers/importers must apply an additional label on each piece of furniture with which they declare the presence or absence of added flame retardant chemicals in furniture components.

The provision, known as Senate Bill (SB) 1019, applies only to upholstered seatings manufactured from January 1st 2015 and covers the following components:

- covering materials;
- barrier materials (interliners placed between the cover and the filling);
- resilient filling materials;
- decking materials being the filling materials present in the fixed part of the seat underneath the removable cushions, typical of armchairs and sofas.

It is at the manufacturer's discretion to decide whether his/her products will/or will not contain flame retardant chemicals. The requirement is limited only to compliance with TB 117-2013.

Inside the label, the box shall be crossed out with an X:

- Contain added flame retardant chemicals
- or
- Contain NO added flame retardant chemicals.

The first box must be crossed if the flame retardant chemicals added are present at a level above 1,000 parts per million (1.000 ppm).

The furniture manufacturer shall then require specific declarations or test reports to its suppliers stating the presence or absence of such substances. If they are present, it is not necessary to declare which is the chemical nature of the added fireproofing additives.

These documents should be retained by the manufacturer/supplier of the product and, at the request of the Bureau of California, they must be provided within 30 days.

Random checks on products placed on the market for which has been declared the absence of flame retardant chemicals are considered. In case of false declarations, heavy fines are settled down. Both the manufacturer and component suppliers for the upholstered furniture are jointly and severally liable for documentation. The violations are published on the web site www.bearhfti.ca.gov.

Why California published this provision? It is believed that the fire retardant chemicals present in furniture components may be harmful for the health; therefore this provision intends to give consumers the right to be informed about the characteristics of the products they buy.

In order to limit the widespread use of flame retardant chemicals, the California Government has decided to revise the reaction test methods by updating the TB 117. In fact the degree of severity of fire tests, all based on the use a lit cigarette, was lowered and consequently many materials, including non-fireproofed, pass the tests.

These provisions do not apply to upholstered furniture for the contract sector for which TB 133 test is required that, being very severe, can be overcome only by suitably fire retardant materials.

At the moment, these provisions do not apply outside California.

THIS ARTICLE MEETS THE
FLAMMABILITY REQUIREMENTS OF
CALIFORNIA BUREAU OF ELECTRONIC
AND APPLIANCE REPAIR, HOME
FURNISHINGS AND THERMAL
INSULATION TECHNICAL BULLETIN
117-2013. CARE SHOULD BE
EXERCISED NEAR OPEN FLAME OR
WITH BURNING CIGARETTES.

The upholstery materials in this product:
____ contain added flame retardant
chemicals

____ contain NO added flame retardant
chemicals

The State of California has updated the
flammability standard and determined
that the fire safety requirements for this
product can be met without adding flame
retardant chemicals. The State has
identified many flame retardant
chemicals as being known to, or strongly
suspected of, adversely impacting human
health or development.

This is an example of a label.

1. The statement at the top, regarding the flammability, must be reproduced in capital letters; the one below is not necessary.
2. The “flame retardant chemical statement” can be located under the flammability label, preferably separated by a thick black line, or to the right.
3. The flammability label should not be placed above or to the left of the flammability label.
4. The minimum label size is 2 x 3 inches (about 5 x 8 cm).
5. The height of the font must be similar to that of the flammability label that is at least 1/8 inch (3.2 mm).
6. The label must be applied to the product in a permanent manner.