

Business Advice

Selling Second-Hand Furniture

Britain leads the world with fire resistance requirements for almost all domestic furniture and furnishings.

Since March 1993, if you sell used furniture, you will be required to comply with the Furniture and Furnishings Fire (Safety) Regulations. *Please take time to read this brief summary.*

The Regulations apply to you if, **in the course of a trade or business**, you sell, or intend to supply furniture to the public for their own domestic use.

Charity shops selling furniture to raise funds for their charity are not exempt and any furniture they sell must comply with the Regulations.

Charities merely DISTRIBUTING furniture free of charge (or for a nominal fee to cover delivery) to the poor and needy are probably not acting in the course of a trade or business and can continue to distribute furniture which does not comply.

The Regulations do not apply to furniture for export, furniture manufactured before 1950 and the re-upholstery of furniture made before that date; and furniture in second-hand caravans.

Some examples of upholstered furniture covered by the Regulations are:

- Chairs, settees, padded stools, ottomans, pouffes, beds and divans - including bases and headboards - and sofas.
- Children's furniture, baby nests, bouncing cradles, cots, carry cots, Moses baskets, highchairs, playpens, prams and pushchairs.
- Bean bags, mattresses, and pillows.
- Garden furniture suitable for indoor use.
- Loose and stretch covers, including those for use in caravans.

The fire resistance requirements of the Regulations say that all:

- Upholstery, with the exception of mattresses, bed bases and pillows, must be able to pass a cigarette test.
- Filling materials must pass a specified test for ignitability.
- Covers - including loose covers and material sold for covering furniture - must pass a match test or, in certain cases, have an interliner. Again, the only exceptions are bedding, bed bases and pillows.

If you're unsure whether any furniture you intend to sell complies with the Regulations, the following pointers may act as a guide:

- The Regulations were progressively introduced for new furniture from November 1988 and all domestic furniture made since March 1990 should be fit for resale.
- If furniture carries a permanent manufacturer's label saying it complies with the Regulations together with the warning: 'CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE' it is almost certainly safe to sell it. If in doubt, contact your nearest Trading Standards Office.

You are advised not to sell furniture which does not have a permanent warning label.

The Regulations say it is a criminal offence to supply, or have in your possession for supply, furniture which doesn't meet the requirements of the Regulations. You could be taken to Court and prosecuted, leading to a substantial fine.

This advice is designed to provide basic guidance to traders. It is **not** a complete or authoritative statement of the law. For further advice or assistance on this or any other Trading Standards legislation, please contact your nearest office. We will be pleased to offer this information in larger print or translated into any language on request.

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