



THE BRITISH FURNITURE CONFEDERATION

The single voice of the furniture & bed industry

## Political Notebook – May 2009

A monthly activity report from the British Furniture Confederation

### 1. Flammability Regulations

On the 18<sup>th</sup> May the British Furniture Confederation launched its comprehensive new Guide to the Furniture and Furnishings Fire Safety Regulations. The Guide was compiled by FIRA's flammability specialists on behalf of the BFC, with valuable input from BFC members and other industry experts. The Guide covers the flammability requirements for all upholstered domestic products including sofas, armchairs, beds, mattresses, mattress toppers and some outdoor furniture. It provides comprehensive advice on the requirements for manufacturers of fabrics and foams as well as the manufacturer or retailer of the final product. The launch took place at Furniture Makers' Hall in London, where a capacity crowd attended from all sectors of the industry.

Government research estimated that, from 1988 to 2000, the Regulations saved between 710 and 1860 lives, and avoided countless more injuries. Not only are these Regulations vitally important, but it's clear that the improved understanding and compliance from the new Guide will have a direct impact on consumer safety.

Essential for all manufacturers, importers and retailers, the Guide will be freely available either as a limited edition document or as a download from FIRA's website ([www.askfira.co.uk](http://www.askfira.co.uk)). Besides the clarifications and updates on new technology, there is an informative Frequently Asked Questions segment, together with sections on individual products. Also included are summaries of the Regulations, current practices and changes in the industry, reasons for misinterpretation of the Regulations and outlines of the responsibilities of different organisations throughout the supply chain.

The event was launched by Madeleine Moon, MP, and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Group. "Over the past twenty years many lives have been saved by these very important Regulations," she said. "The British Furniture Confederation has taken the lead in bringing the Regulations to the attention of both industry and the general public and has been instrumental in explaining them and highlighting their importance." Ms Moon also provides the Foreword for the Guide.

Martin Jourdan, Chairman of the BFC, said: "It's become clear to us that after many years of living with the UK's complex Regulations on flammability, companies still need expert help and advice in understanding and complying with these Regulations and we hope that this updated Guide will help clarify the many aspects of this subject."

## **2. Pre-pack administration**

After dialogue between the BFC and Gareth Thomas MP, minister at the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), progress has been made on the issue of pre-pack administration. Gareth Thomas has responded positively to the BFC's campaign to raise attention to this administration practice, which can potentially sink profitable businesses, and has promised to investigate the matter. Despite the fact that BERR have acknowledged the dangers of this type of administration, the BFC continues to seek examples of this problem from its members. It is vital that the BFC shows specific examples to BERR to improve the attention given to the furniture industry, and if your business has been affected by a pre-pack administration, please do contact the BFC Secretary (details below).

## **3. All Party Group Meeting**

The All-Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group held its most recent session on the same day as the launch of the Flammability Regulation guide. The well-attended session was chaired by Madeleine Moon MP, and assisted by BFC Chairman, Martin Jourdan, who updated the group on the industry's progress on issues from Scambusters to pre-pack administration. The meeting's invited guest, Sarah Lambert, Acting Head of the European Commission Representation in the UK, provided an explanation of the role of the European Commission and the EU in general, as well as taking questions on a broad range of issues including the promotion of disabled workers; the real cost of 'best value for money'; and the failure of regional development agencies to support the furniture industry. Sarah Lambert offered to provide help and support on EU issues to the UK furniture industry and committed to following up from the session with future dialogue.

## **4. Early Day Motion update**

As part of the launch of the BFC's flammability guide Madeleine Moon MP has tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM) which celebrates the role of the new guide. The new EDM already has cross-party support and is another opportunity for the BFC to highlight the importance of the furniture industry, and the Confederation's commitment to fire safety. But it's not just the flammability Early Day Motion. The 'Ask If It Is Great British' and Credit Insurance Early Day Motions are still active, and the British Furniture Confederation is asking all its members and supporters to write to their local MP asking them to sign EDMs: 1530, 500, and 952.

**ENDS**

### Editors' Notes

The British Furniture Confederation (BFC) acts a single voice for UK furniture and bed manufacturers. Led by an executive, comprising representatives of BCFA, BFM, FIRA and NBF, and supported by associate members (AMUSF, GMB, Proskills and WCFM), its mission is to ensure that the UK furniture industry has a strong and sustainable dialogue with Government. Its roles include:

- Securing the long term future and prosperity of the British furniture industry
- Raising the profile of the industry at a political level
- Formulating strategies for dealing with key industry issues
- Engaging in dialogue and negotiating with Government on these issues
- Working with the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Group to promote cross party discussion and to meet with senior influencers within Government agencies

Ensuring that the industry gains the recognition and attention that its size deserves:

BFC Secretary, FIRA, Maxwell Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2EW.

Tel: 01438 777700

Fax: 01438 777800

email: [secretariat@britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk](mailto:secretariat@britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk)

**Supplementary Information      Full text of the BFC EDMs**

**EDM 1530**

**FURNITURE AND FIRE SAFETY GUIDE**

19.05.2009

**Moon, Madeleine**

19 signatures

Bottomley, Peter	Campbell, Gregory	Campbell, Ronnie
<i>Caton, Martin</i>	Clarke, Tom	Corbyn, Jeremy
Dismore, Andrew	Dobbin, Jim	<i>Durkan, Mark</i>
<i>George, Andrew</i>	Hughes, Simon	Jackson, Glenda
Jones, Lynne	Leech, John	Prentice, Gordon
<i>Russell, Bob</i>	<i>Spink, Bob</i>	Vis, Rudi

That this House welcomes the launch of the British Furniture Confederation's Guide to the Fire Safety of Furniture and Furnishings in the Home; recognises that the UK flammability regulations have been in existence for over 20 years and in 2000 it was estimated that they had saved up to 1,860 lives since their introduction; notes the importance of the new guide in clarifying and explaining the existing regulations to account for recent precedents and changes; and further notes the high quality and standard of British furniture.

**EDM 952**

**ASK IF IT IS GREAT BRITISH FURNITURE CAMPAIGN**

03.03.2009

**Moon, Madeleine**

45 signatures

Borrow, David S	<i>Browne, Jeremy</i>	Burgon, Colin
Campbell, Gregory	Campbell, Ronnie	Caton, Martin
Corbyn, Jeremy	Cryer, Ann	Dean, Janet
Dismore, Andrew	Dobbin, Jim	Dodds, Nigel
Drew, David	Etherington, Bill	Foster, Michael Jabez
Francis, Hywel	<i>Goodman, Paul</i>	Hancock, Mike
Hemming, John	Howells, Kim	Iddon, Brian
Jenkins, Brian	Jones, Lynne	Kidney, David

Leech, John	McCafferty, Chris	Moffatt, Laura
Osborne, Sandra	Pope, Greg	<i>Prentice, Gordon</i>
Riordan, Linda	Robinson, Iris	Rowen, Paul
Simpson, Alan	<i>Spink, Bob</i>	<i>Taylor, David</i>
Vis, Rudi	Williams, Betty	Williams, Mark
Williams, Stephen	Willis, Phil	Wilshire, David
Wilson, Sammy	Winterton, Nicholas	

That this House acknowledges the importance of the furniture manufacturing industry to the UK economy, with an annual output of almost £10 billion and direct employment of around 124,000 people within 7,500 enterprises; notes the Ask If It Is Great British Furniture campaign, as featured on the BBC 2 programme, Working Lunch and in the national press; emphasises the qualities of British furniture which comes from craft skills which have been conceived, developed and perfected over many years, decades and centuries of tradition, producing inspirational designs, from the most traditional manufacturing methods, with the most stringent environmental and health and safety standards, the shortest delivery times and the best after-sales service; and further notes that the campaign is an important initiative that should be supported and applauded.

**EDM 500**

**CREDIT INSURANCE AND THE FURNITURE  
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

19.01.2009

**Moon, Madeleine**

47 signatures

Anderson, David	Austin, John	Battle, John
Bottomley, Peter	Burden, Richard	Caton, Martin
Corbyn, Jeremy	Crausby, David	Cryer, Ann
Dean, Janet	Devine, Jim	<i>Dismore, Andrew</i>
<i>Dobbin, Jim</i>	Dobson, Frank	<i>Doran, Frank</i>
Drew, David	Durkan, Mark	Etherington, Bill
Evans, Nigel	Francis, Hywel	Hancock, Mike
<i>Henderson, Doug</i>	<i>Hopkins, Kelvin</i>	Howells, Kim

Hoyle, Lindsay	Illsley, Eric	Jenkins, Brian
Jones, Lynne	McCafferty, Chris	McCartney, Ian
McDonnell, Alasdair	McDonnell, John	McGuire, Anne
Meale, Alan	Osborne, Sandra	Prentice, Gordon
Robinson, Iris	Roy, Lindsay	Simpson, Alan
Simpson, David	Singh, Marsha	Taylor, Dari
Taylor, David	Wareing, Robert N	Williams, Betty
Winterton, Nicholas		

That this House acknowledges the importance of the furniture manufacturing industry to the UK economy, with an annual output of almost £10 billion and direct employment of around 124,000 people within 7,500 enterprises; further notes the problem of obtaining credit insurance in light of the economic downturn particularly in the furniture manufacturing industry; and recognises that credit insurance companies are promoting panic by removing insurance cover from furniture manufacturers and their suppliers, often without basing such action upon the risk involved or the financial viability of the individuals or firms involved.