

Annex 8: Proposed amendments to schedule 5 - the match test - part 1 and schedule 4 - the cigarette test - of the furniture and furnishings (fire) (safety) regulations 1988 - response form

The Department may, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, make available, on public request, individual responses.

The closing date for this consultation is 7th October 2014.

Please provide answers to any of the questions below, and provide any additional response you believe is appropriate, headed:

Your name:

Redacted

Organisation (if applicable): QFC (The Quality Furniture Company Limited)

Address: QFC, Alma Park, Grantham, NG31 9SE

Please return completed forms to:

Terry Edge

4th Floor, Orchard 1

BIS

1 Victoria Street

London SW1 0ET

Telephone: 020 7215 5576

email: terry.edge@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Please tick boxes below which best describe you or your organisation.

	Organisation type
<input type="checkbox"/>	Business representative organisation/trade body
<input type="checkbox"/>	Central government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Charity or social enterprise
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Large business (over 250 staff)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium business (50 to 250 staff)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Micro business (up to 9 staff)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small business (10 to 49 staff)

	Organisation type
	Other (please describe):

Please note: in addition to the consultation questions below, we would be very grateful if you could also answer the questions from the Impact Assessment which follow them.

Consultation questions:

Question 1: Do you think this proposal will achieve its aims of: helping to make UK furniture greener, save money to industry and making UK furniture more fire safe?

Greener Furniture: Possibly

For the last quarter approx. 80% of all fabric ordered by QFC was 100% polyester. From the evidence seen so far from test filling type 2, the following would be true;
Up to a potential 51% reduction in coating could be achieved.

However it should be noted that this is only reflective of the trends in the market at present. It may be the case that we see a return to more natural compositions of material, in which case the data we have seen would mean an increase in coating required and there a negative green effect.

With regards to the splitting rule to ensure certainty it is highly probable that all sofas will be engineered to comply when there is a split in the outer material. This may mean that materials under the cover may require more chemical coating to make them safe, negating any benefit achieved in polyester chemical reduction.

Save Money: Possibly

To review this we have considered the point in 2 sections; Reduction in Coating Cost and Associated Costs and produced a final summary. Due to the lack of any statistically viable data the below contains assumptions.

- **Reduction in Coating;**

As 80% of the fabric consumed by QFC is a 100% Polyester composition, a reduction in coating should be possible and in principle mean a reduction in price to manufacture.

We have estimated that we could save £0.10p/meter on fabric costs

This equates to £1 per sofa saving, based on our average meter consumption being 10 meters per sofa

- **Associated Costs;**

QFC consider that the following associated costs would be true if this proposal becomes regulation;

- **Decrease** – Removal of cigarette test. We have spoken to our test house and we consider a reduction of about 33% compared to our current test
- **Increase** – Complication of proposal – Testing costs, we consider that on the majority of fabrics we supply we will need to complete two tests on each material. Both test filling

type 2 tests, one which is destined to use feather and the other which is not. This cost has not yet been defined but we consider this will double our current match test cost

- **Increase** – Complication of proposal – Testing costs. Previously unregulated material will now need to be tested at extra cost
- **Increase** – Complication of Proposal – Diligence testing and management. With the increased number of tests and materials, we will need to invest more in our diligence systems and employ at least one more full time member of staff. Until the proposal achieves approval we will not be able to fully understand these costs
- **Increase** – Redevelopment. It will be necessary to redevelop all existing ranges that will transfer over the due date.
- **Increase** – Flame retardant material within 40mm when using splitting covers will mean higher raw material costs

Summary

QFC considers that any potential savings made in reduction of chemical coating will be absorbed by the extra expense of the complication and testing that the new proposals bring. This assumption is based on the fabric mills and coaters passing back the saving in full. Should this not happen, cost could well increase.

Make Furniture Safer – No, but won't make it any less safe

As this proposal does not request any changes to manufacturing methods, then it is not possible to see how the test alone will make upholstered furniture any safer than current fire statistics suggest.

Consequential changes driven by the confusion of the new proposal mean that as a company we will look to test more vigorously below the surface materials for their flame retardant capabilities. This will provide a bigger safety margin should the outer fabric splits even if it has a certificate to suggest it doesn't split. It's hard though to see how this will increase fire safety, we would suggest it will maintain the current high standard of safety.

This proposed change to test method has failed to recognise that ignition sources are changing away from traditional perceived causes of ignition such as match and cigarette and moving towards electrical ignition and other smouldering sources such as phone charging and e-cigarettes. Therefore a blanket removal of the smouldering test (cigarette) on all materials could well reduce fire safety. Should the proposals be successful, QFC would like to see an inclusion list for fabric types susceptible to smouldering ignition sources and not an outright removal of the cigarette test.

Questions 2: Do you think that paragraphs 19-22 accurately set out the need for a change to the current match test?

A ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Comments:

DecaBDE, is now moving its way out of the UK market by industry pressure to be greener, and in general most of our fabric uses new BFR's, which at this time are not SVHC's. We do believe that the industry should be challenged to find alternatives to BFR's and agree that it is time for the regulations to be revisited. However we consider the challenge to remove BFR's should be outside of the scope of this regulation and perhaps incentivised as means to push it forwards.

Question 3: Do you think the proposed changes are viable (paragraphs 23-29)?

A ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Comments:

Please see answer to question 1

Question 4: What are your views on the inclusion of currently unregulated materials (paragraphs 27-29)?

Comments:

QFC considers that the inclusion of unregulated material is needed if the proposed are implemented. This will ensure that variances in test materials and outcomes will be protected against.

However the current method is a barrier to ignition test and as such unseen/unregulated materials should not be considered as a risk.

Question 5: Do you agree with the benefits BIS believes the changes will bring?

A ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Comments: Please see answers to Question 1

Question 6: What is your view on BIS's reasons for bringing forward the changes (paragraphs 41-42)?

Comments:

We can only comment on factors involving QFC. At this current moment in time theoretically there are chemical savings to be made. However this is a snapshot of right now and does not reflect changing market trends. Currently 100% Polyesters are popular in our market place, but this is likely to change in the future. Whilst we support some aspects of this proposal we consider that waiting for the wider review (2016) would be more beneficial. At this review we would like regulation of record keeping and diligence to be considered. The methods of testing

Question 7: General rating of the proposals.

On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest, grade your overall approval of the proposals

	5	4	3	2	1
Right problems identified		x			
Range of options wide enough			x		
Preferred options well chosen				x	

Question 8: Do you have any other comments that might aid the consultation process as a whole?

Comments:

For a considered review of these proposals more statistically proven data needs to be provided. This would remove some if not all of the assumption work that has been required to complete the review of these proposals

Below are the additional questions from the Impact Assessment. Please respond to them on this part of the form.

Q1: Is the assumption on the cost of testing above right in your view? Could you provide evidence supporting your arguments?

Unable to answer as not privy to testing costs and volume of tests completed in the UK

Q2: Do you have any evidence that could help to refine this cost estimates?

Unable to answer as not privy to data provided in IA. However we believe our own increase in testing, diligence and re-development would be somewhere in the region of the figure given in the IA for our company alone

Q3: Are there any other costs not included here that should be included? Please provide evidence supporting your arguments.

The IA talks about familiarisation of new regulations and works on assumptions. Our assumption of time to migrate and familiarisation is very different to that of BIS. We believe that our existing line of product will need to be redeveloped prior to go live. At the present time we cannot give a calculated cost. This will only be realised post acceptance of the proposal

Q4: Do you agree with the assumption that there will be minimal losses of stock given the transition period? What is your normal turnover of stock?

Agree that finished product loss will be low as QFC will set about processes meaning that on switchover date we are already working to the new test principles.
It remains unseen if we will suffer any consequential losses due to raw materials, again if we have to re-develop model ranges before the change date, these costs should be kept to a minimum

Q5: Do you agree with the assumption on annual cost savings to UK based companies testing of fabrics for the cigarette test? Could you provide information on the cost of the cigarette testing for your company?

Please see the below table that outlines our consideration about future testing costs;

Costs	£'s	%
Current Test	40	100
Revised with Removal of Cigarette	26.8	67
Revised cost including extra test for liner	53.6	134

From the table we consider there will be an increase in testing and therefore disagree with the assumption on annual cost savings due to the removal of cigarette test.

Our testing budget is £30k, we expect this will increase to approx. £40k. In reality we expect a bigger increase due to unregulated material tests, but the cost of this remains unclear at present.

Q6: Do you agree with the range of cost savings above? What are the cost savings most likely to be for your company?

We believe that if we were to see the benefits passed back in full from fabric mills and Coaters then on 100% Polyester fabrics, we could see a £0.10p/meter saving, averaging around £1 per finished sofa.

The savings on other compositions are not as easy to calculate as more data is required

Q7: Are there any other methodologies you think would be more appropriate?

This needs to be answered by a coater/mill

Q8: Do you agree with the cost estimates above? Could you provide alternative estimates?
Could you provide estimates of cost savings for upholstered garden furniture and/or caravan upholstered furniture?

n/a to QFC

Q9: Do you agree with the assumptions above towards calculating the total annual amount of treated fabric? Please provide evidence supporting your arguments.

Q10: Are there any other unquantified costs or benefits? If possible, please provide evidence supporting your arguments.

Q11: Is this a fair reflection of how smaller businesses will be affected? Please provide evidence supporting your arguments.

Q12: Are the familiarisation cost savings, in time, between options 2 and 4 an accurate reflection of the difference? Please provide evidence supporting your arguments.

As documented in our response it remains very unclear to our business if we will see any cost savings as we will need to increase testing, admin, development etc

Q13: Do the cost saving time profiles accurately reflect the timings of cost savings your business expect to see?

Thank you for your views on this consultation. Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply ☐ Yes Please

At BIS we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be okay if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

☐ Yes

☐ No

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET
Tel: 020 7215 5000

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BIS/14/980