

LOG OF MEETING

SUBJECT: Flame Retardant Chemicals

DATE: April 9, 1998

TIME: 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

PLACE: National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington,

ENTRY SOURCE: Michael A. Babich, EHHS *MAB*

COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES: Michael A. Babich, EHHS; Dale R. Ray, EC; Patricia Semple, COMG; Bini Dahlman, MASC.

NON-FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVES: See attached list of attendees and program.

Summary:

This meeting was sponsored by the National Association of State Fire Marshals and the Consumer Federation of America. Three panelists commented on some of the issues that will be addressed at the Commission hearing on flame retardant (FR) chemicals, including toxicity of FR chemicals to consumers, and the smoke toxicity of FR treated products. Dr. Hardy commented that there are a number of FR chemicals that might be used in upholstered furniture, and that they would not present a hazard to consumers. Dr. Hardy briefly described how new and existing FR chemicals are regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, and added that the well-documented risk of residential fires is the primary concern. Dr. Damant commented that the smoke toxicity associated with FR treated materials is no worse than that of non-FR materials. Dr. Spivak commented that there is no known effect of soiling on flame resistance, although further study would be worthwhile. Dr. Spivak added that back coatings are durable for up to 15 years.

The panel presentations were followed by a general discussion. Some participants commented that the long life of furniture products is no reason to delay action, even if it will take longer to derive benefits. Others stated that the cost of FR treatments is a minor issue. Some participants added that FR treating the filling materials would provide additional protection. At the moderator's request, Mr. Ray provided an update of recent CPSC activities on upholstered furniture and the hearing on FR chemicals. The moderator, Mr. Bliss, concluded that expeditious action by CPSC should be encouraged; the use of FR chemicals in upholstered furniture to reduce fire risk is reasonable; and efforts to increase smoke detector usage, the use of sprinklers in residences; and information and education programs should be encouraged.

Attachments:

CPSC/OFC OF THE SECRETARY
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

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National Association of State Fire Marshals



Consumer Federation of America

Discussion Panel on Assessing the Risks of Fire Retardant Additives

Thursday, April 9, 1998 10 a.m. - noon

**Location: National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 1000,
Washington, DC**

Purpose The purpose of this session is to convene experts on the subject of flammability and fire retardants to address the major questions that have been raised about the risks to consumers associated with the use of fire retardant additives.

Moderator **Donald P. Bliss**, New Hampshire State Fire Marshal and liaison to the National Association of State Fire Marshals Science and Technology Advisory Group

Experts **Gordon Damant**, president, Inter-City Testing and Consulting, Sacramento, and former Chief of the California Bureau of Home Furnishings and Thermal Insulation.

Steven Spivak, PhD, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Fire Engineering, University of Maryland at College Park.

Marcia Hardy, DVM, PhD, Senior Toxicology Advisor, Albemarle Corporation, Baton Rouge, and Chairman of the Chemical Manufacturers Association's Brominated Flame Retardants Industry Panel.

Questions to Be Addressed

1. **Health effects.** Everyone is aware that the fire retardant TRIS, used in children's sleepwear in the 1970s, later was found to be carcinogenic. That experience looms large in the current discussion about the health effects of fire retardant chemicals that might be used in an upholstered furniture flammability standard.
 - In what ways can consumers be exposed to fire retardant additives used in furniture? Are factory workers who apply the chemicals at risk also?
 - What are the short-term and long-term effects of fire-retardant additives on humans, especially children?
 - Is the smoke from a burning chair that has been fire-retarded more toxic than one that has not been treated?
 - How do the risks of health effects from fire retardant additives compare with the risk of fire from not using fire retardant additives?
2. **Costs to consumers.** Most fires occur among populations with low household incomes. The furniture industry has said that the additional cost of adding fire retardants to furniture will drive the cost up and put such furniture out of the reach of consumers. Doesn't that defeat the purpose of a standard — to save lives?
3. **Effectiveness of fire retardants over time.** Some concerns have been expressed about the long-term effectiveness of fire retardants on furniture that gets worn and dirty over time. Is older furniture more likely to be involved in fires than newer furniture for this reason? What about chairs that are reupholstered by the consumer?

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19) DALE R. RAY	CPSC, 4330 East-West Hwy, Bethesda, MD	CPSC
20) Steven Spivek	Univ. of Maryland, Coll PK MD	
21) Gordon DAMANT	ITC, SACRAMENTO, CA.	
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National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 1000
Thursday, April 9, 1998 10:00 a.m. - Noon

	NAME	Address and ORGANIZATION
23. 1.	Sally Greenberg	Consumers Union
24. 2.	Sam Christie	Product Safety Letter
25. 3.	Karen Suhr	NASFM
26. 4.	Pete Sparber	NASFM
27. 5.	Frank McGarry	NASFM
28. 6.	Marcia Hardy	Albemarle Corp.
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