



## Banning toxic flame retardants in upholstered furniture

- Chemical flame retardants such as poly-brominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD) and organohalogens, are present in a wide range of consumer products including upholstered furniture.
- Research has shown that these kinds of chemical flame retardants accumulate in the human body and have been linked to numerous health problems such as cancer, immune disorders, reproductive problems and low IQ in children. There are also major concerns about their impact on the environment.
- Fire fighters are exposed to higher concentrations of these chemicals in a combusted state in the course of our duties. ([Canadian Fire Station Dust Study, 2020](#)).
- Canada has acknowledged the health risks posed by select chemical flame retardants and banned their manufacture, sale, import and use. However, banning only certain classes of flame retardants opens the door to loopholes and only facilitates their continued use.
- The IAFF supports Bill C-28, *Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act*, that proposes the consideration of chemical exposures to vulnerable populations and cumulative effects and recognizes the importance of labelling transparency for consumers to make educated decisions about the products they use in their homes, however we recommend that vulnerable populations include fire fighters, and prioritizes occupational standards like fire and emergency services when assessing chemical safety. For example, current safety tests may not necessarily include combustible states or higher levels of exposure.
- Flame retardants, accounting for 5-10% of the product weight, are unnecessary in upholstered furniture, as an effective level of safety for fire fighters and the public can be achieved by regulating the smoldering resistance of furniture, which does not require chemical flame retardants. As such, the IAFF supports the need to prioritize safer options for public health and the environment.
- Fire fighters are concerned that “open flame” testing as a basis for flammability standards for consumer products, such as one currently being developed by UL in Canada, may be exploited by the chemical industry as a reason to advocate regulation of the increased use of chemical flame retardants. Open flame concerns are a red herring in this discussion as most fires result from smoldering situations.

### What we're asking:

That the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Health to work together to completely ban all classes of chemical flame retardants in upholstered furniture whether manufactured in Canada or imported. We also ask them to investigate the concerns about open flame testing, while considering the merits of smolder resistance standards.

**For more information about this issue or any other issue affecting Canada's professional fire fighters, visit [www.iaff.org](http://www.iaff.org) or contact the IAFF Canadian Office at (613) 567-8988. The International Association of Fire Fighters represents 320,000 professional fire fighters in North America, including over 26,000 in Canada. The IAFF is affiliated with the AFL-CIO and the Canadian Labour Congress.**