

CPSC MEETING LOG UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE

Meeting Between: CPSC staff and members of ASTM E.05-15 Subcommittee Task Groups

Date of Meeting: October 2, 2000

Meeting Site: ASTM Headquarters, West Conshohocken, PA

Log Entry By: Dale R. Ray, Project Mgr., EC, (301) 504-0962 x1323

Participants: Kurt Reimann, BASF Corp. (Task Group Chairman)
Tom Fritz, Armstrong World Ind. (Subcommittee Chairman)
Marcelo Hirschler, GBH Int'l. (Subcommittee Sec'y.)
Hank Roux, Roux Int'l. (Cigarette Ignition Task Group Chairman)
Joe Ziolkowski, UFAC (Furniture Industry Coalition Chairman)
Neil Ullman, Ullman Associates (Coalition/ASTM consultant)
Dallas Pinion, Brown & Williamson (Lab Task Group Chairman)
Richard Gann, NIST
Dale Ray, CPSC
and about 30 others representing textile, furniture, tobacco and chemical industries, and ASTM staff

Summary:

This quarterly meeting of the ASTM E.05-15 voluntary standards Subcommittee on Contents and Furnishings included discussion of the activities of its eight active task groups. One of these is the Upholstered Furniture Small Open Flame Ignition Task Group chaired by Dr. Reimann (among the other seven task group discussions were activities on upholstered furniture/cigarette ignition, mattresses and bedding, and cigarette fire safety).

Dr. Reimann opened the Upholstered Furniture Small Open Flame Task Group discussion by describing a new effort by various furniture-related industry organizations to establish a Furniture Industry Coalition. This coalition was formed pursuant to a) an August 2000 Position Statement by the Alliance for the Polyurethanes Industry (API, a spin-off of the Society of the Plastics Industry's Polyurethanes Division) supporting uniform open flame standards for furniture and mattresses, and b) an August 2000 Mission Statement by the Upholstered Furniture Action Council (UFAC, an arm of the American Furniture Manufacturers Association) supporting research toward a possible voluntary consensus standard. Such a standard could be proposed through ASTM. The Furniture Industry Coalition member organizations are:

- The Alliance for the Polyurethanes Industry
- The Polyurethane Foam Association
- The American Textile Manufacturers Institute
- The Upholstered Furniture Action Council / American Furniture Manufacturers Association
- The American Fiber Manufacturers Association
- Cotton Incorporated, and
- The National Cotton Council

Mr. Ziolkowski (Furniture Industry Coalition Chairman) presented some general information about the small open flame test method and product testing plans being developed by the Coalition. (The Coalition held a separate, closed meeting immediately prior to the ASTM meeting). Mr. Ziolkowski said the test method was similar to the CPSC staff's draft method, i.e., using a small-scale mockup exposed for 20 seconds to a small (12") butane flame, but would measure sample weight loss rather than combustion time or flame spread. This approach would be designed to allow for the use of barriers, with less reliance on flame retardant cover fabrics. The Coalition plans to develop a statistical design for testing and analysis, and to conduct an interlaboratory study with six or seven labs to evaluate the feasibility of the method. Mr. Ziolkowski stated that this test program would be completed by about the end of calendar year 2000, with statistical analysis to follow.

There was some discussion about how well the Coalition's approach would take into account the dominant influence of cover fabric ignitability, and about how effectively a weight loss standard could reduce the risk associated with childplay fires and other small flame ignitions. Mr. Ray noted the role of cover fabrics and the predominance of childplay among open flame-related deaths were primary factors in the CPSC staff's decision to focus on limiting ignition and fire growth instead of limiting weight loss or heat release. Mr. Ziolkowski stated the Coalition's intent to achieve a reasonable level of safety while providing flexibility to manufacturers.

Mr. Ray presented new information released by CPSC regarding national fire loss data. He described the general methodology used to estimate 1997 residential fire losses, and various new elements of the estimating techniques; the resulting estimates differ significantly from--and are not directly comparable with--estimates reported for previous years. He also distributed copies of the newly issued EP staff report incorporating this new methodology for the 1997 fire data. He further discussed additional methodological improvements being incorporated into an upcoming, furniture-specific report on 1998 fire loss estimates.

Mr. Ray then presented the results of the CPSC-sponsored interlaboratory study on the CPSC staff's draft small open flame test method. Representatives of several of the nine participating laboratories were present at the ASTM meeting. Mr. Ray described the staff's methods and procedures in conducting this study, and presented a summary of the observed flammability test results. He then discussed the staff's statistical analysis of the data, and presented calculated repeatability and reproducibility statistics. He noted that

the staff's analysis concluded that the draft test method yielded reasonable consistency and precision, and was suitable for use in a standard. Mr. Ray distributed copies of the staff reports on the interlab study to the attendees.

During a break in the meeting, some Furniture Industry Coalition representatives met separately to review the CPSC interlab data. They announced upon returning that they disagreed with some of the staff's conclusions. Some discussion ensued among the larger group, with some attendees expressing a desire to review the reports independently. Mr. Ziolkowski said the Coalition would present its analysis at a later time.

Mr. Ray answered a number of questions about the potential sequence of events in CPSC's regulatory proceeding. He noted that the staff's next step would be to complete its remaining technical work and forward a briefing package to the Commission. The package would include recommendations on whether to proceed with a proposed small open flame rule, on the remaining (cigarette ignition) portion of the 1993 NASFM petition, and on the 1999 NASFM petition regarding polyurethane foam labeling. Mr. Ray reiterated the staff's commitment to voluntary standards, noting the agency's policy and statutory obligations to consider and, when appropriate, defer to voluntary standards. He strongly encouraged the Furniture Industry Coalition to complete its test development work as soon as possible, and encouraged the ASTM Task Group to consider the Coalition's activities in its work to develop a possible voluntary standard.