

# Safety Around The Home

## Changes To California Regulation Could Impact Fire Safety

(NAPSA)—People across the country, including you and your family, could be affected by a recent change in fire safety regulations in California.

Regulators in the Golden State recently made changes to a fire safety standard called Technical Bulletin 117, removing a test that measures the flammability of furniture when exposed to open flame sources, such as lighters, candles and matches. The standard has been in place since the mid-1970s and its removal could make consumers more vulnerable to the devastation of fire. Because of California's population and purchasing power, many U.S. furniture manufacturers have followed California's rules no matter where the furniture was sold, which means people in other states have benefited from California's fire protection standards.

According to a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) analysis, fires involving upholstered furniture account for the largest share of fire deaths of any first item ignited in U.S. homes. Now, regulators in California say there is no need for an open flame test because most furniture fires begin with cigarettes. However, NFPA statistics show that a large portion of furniture fires are started by open flames.

Studies demonstrate that flame retardants can be an effective way to deal with the threat of fire. The peer-reviewed journal *Fire Technology* recently released a study by Dr. Matthew Blais, a nationally renowned fire science researcher at Southwest Research Institute in Texas, showing that flame retardants used in the foam cushions of upholstered furniture provide up to



**Strict fire safety standards for upholstered furniture can save lives and property.**

three or four additional minutes of escape time during home fires involving upholstered furniture exposed to flaming ignition sources.

Many experts agree there is a need for a test to protect against open flame sources. NFPA has proposed developing its own open flame test. And the Consumer Product Safety Commission is considering an open flame test as a part of its flammability standards for upholstered furniture.

Indeed, in a letter to the head of the California bureau that is making the change to the state's regulation, NFPA President James Shannon wrote of the importance of having an open flame test: "NFPA feels strongly that a fully comprehensive fire safety regulation of upholstered furniture must address the full spectrum of major fire scenarios, including the open flame scenarios."

California Governor Jerry Brown has indicated that the changes to the flammability test will take effect at the beginning of 2014.

### Learn More

For further facts about fire, furniture and what you can do to protect yourself, your home and your family, visit [www.frfacts.com](http://www.frfacts.com).