

# ***Information Kit on Testing Commercial Furniture Foams***

## **1 Introduction**

This document provides background information for people interested in having polyurethane (and similar) foams tested for use in commercial furniture applications.

## **2 Requirements**

Both the Australian/New Zealand Standard for office chairs (AS/NZS 4438 - *Height adjustable swivel chairs*) and the Australian/New Zealand Standard for visitor chairs (AS/NZS 4688 - *Fixed height chairs*) specify requirements for 'filling materials'.

The requirements in both standards are:

### **2.1 Filling materials**

- (a) Polyurethane foam used at durability levels 4, 5 and 6 shall comply with AS 2281, Type HR.
- (b) Polyurethane foam used as seat cushioning at durability levels 4, 5 and 6 shall have a minimum density of 38 kg/m<sup>3</sup>.
- (c) Polyurethane foam used as back support cushioning at durability levels 4, 5 and 6 shall have a minimum density of 32 kg/m<sup>3</sup>.
- (d) Density of the polyurethane foam used in cushioning shall be determined according to AS 2282.3. For moulded foam the density shall be tested on core samples without skin.

Note: Polyurethane foam seat and back cushion hardness and minimum thickness selection should be in accordance with the guidelines set out in AS 2281, Table 1A. It is essential that they do not 'bottom out'.

- (e) For multiple layer cushion design all major layers of components shall meet the minimum density requirement of this Standard.

**NB.** Foams and fillings made of materials other than polyurethane will be subject to the same density and flammability requirements.

### **2.2 Burning behaviour**

Office Seating: Filling materials shall meet the burning behaviour performance requirements as set out in AS/NZS 4088.1.

Public Area Seating: More stringent requirements such as British Standard 5852 Source 5 for filling materials may need to be met in public space seating.

### **3 Combinations of foams and fabrics**

In both *AS/NZS 4088.1* and *BS 5852* it is recommended that the foam assessed be tested in combination with the interliner (if applicable) and fabric that will form the composite that is intended to be used in the final product assembly i.e. the finished item of furniture. However, in most cases a foam supplier will have little or no control over the outer layers (interliners and fabrics) that will be specified in combination with their foam.

The alternative (available for foam assessed to the requirements of *AS/NZS 4088.1* only) is that testing be performed using a standard non-flame retardant covering fabric that represents a probable worst case combination. This allows – where the composite is successfully tested – for the results to be 'generalised' i.e. it is considered likely that if the foam performs satisfactorily with this fabric it will perform satisfactorily with all other fabrics. This is the most common approach to foam flammability testing and certification.

*BS 5852* testing is only ever performed on a particular composite and results cannot be generalised beyond that. Compliance, therefore, can only be claimed with respect to the actual combination of foam/interliner/fabric that was tested.

### **4 Flammability (Ignitability) test levels**

Both *AS/NZS 4438* - Height adjustable swivel chairs and *AS/NZS 4688* – Fixed height chairs require **as a minimum** that filling materials meet the burning behaviour performance requirements as set out in *AS/NZS 4088.1*. The ignition source specified in this standard is a smouldering cigarette. The test (*AS/NZS 4088.1*) is suitable for normal commercial/office applications.

Chair foams intended for use in 'public space' seating may be specified as requiring compliance to more stringent testing eg *BS 5852* Source 5. The ignition source specified as 'source 5' in this standard is a 'flaming wooden crib'. Ignition sources 0 to 4 are also available for testing. Ignition source 0 is approximately equal to that used in *AS/NZS 4088.1*, so is rarely specified in Australia or New Zealand. Ignition sources 1 to 5 are more severe, each approximately twice the energy value of the previous. They are appropriate for environments where the risk of ignition is considered greater than normal commercial/office applications (eg public spaces). The severity of the ignition source chosen depends on the furniture's intended end use environment. It is up to the client or specifier to make this determination. Please note: specifiers and/or regulators may choose to include other, or additional, flammability requirements based, for example, on the Australian Building Code or on specific analysis of the hazards present in a particular environment.

Although Sources 1 to 5 of *BS 5852* are flaming ignition sources it cannot be assumed that satisfactory performance against a flaming source will automatically give satisfactory performance against a smouldering ignition source. It is therefore necessary to submit test specimens to both smouldering and flaming ignition tests to comply with any of the *BS 5852* Sources 1 to 5 i.e. both *AS/NZS 4088.1* and *BS 5852* Source X.

## **5 Costs**

### **5.1 Foam testing**

Furntech-AFRDI's charges for **foam testing** are as follows:

Density (to AS 2282.3)	\$200
Flammability (to AS/NZS 4088.1)	\$370
Flammability (to BS 5852 Source 5) <sup>+</sup>	\$540

**These prices are subject to 10% GST.**

NOTE: + Sources 0 to 4 are also available at the same charge. Source 0 is approximately equivalent to AS/NZS 4088.1. Sources 1 to 5 are progressively more severe.

### **5.2 Blue Tick certification**

Furntech-AFRDI's charge for **Blue Tick certification** is \$474, plus GST, less membership discounts, and that entails inclusion on the weblist of endorsed chair components for three years.

Furntech-AFRDI's Blue Tick Product Certification Program includes foams pre-qualified for use in chairs tested to the office chair or fixed height chair standards.

Foam certification is available in the following test combinations only:

- AS 2282.3 (foam density) and AS/NZS 4088.1 (foam flammability)
- AS 2282.3 (foam density), AS/NZS 4088.1 (foam flammability) and *BS 5852 Source (1 to 5)* (foam flammability)

### **5.3 Total costs**

Typical **total costs (foam testing plus Blue Tick certification)** are:

- standard commercial foams (density, AS/NZS 4088.1 plus Blue Tick Certification) \$1,005 plus GST;
- density, AS/NZS 4088.1, BS 5852 Source (1 to 5) plus Blue Tick Certification) \$1,445 plus GST.

Further information on the Blue Tick program is available from Furntech-AFRDI or from the Institute's website at [www.furntech.org.au](http://www.furntech.org.au)

## **6 Samples**

### **6.1 Combination density and flammability (AS 2282.3 and AS/NZS 4088.1)**

The minimum size and number of **slab foam** samples:

- density 380 x 380 x 50 slab foam, three off;
- flammability (AS/NZS 4088.1) 450 x 450 x 75 slab foam, one off.

The minimum size and number of **moulded foam** samples:

- for density and flammability 3 seat and 3 back foams (total required to perform both).

**6.2 Combination density and flammability (AS 2282.3, AS/NZS 4088.1 and BS 5852 Source X)**

The minimum size and number of **slab foam** (and fabric) samples:

- Density 380 x 380 x 50 slab foam, three off;
- Flammability (AS/NZS 4088.1) 450 x 450 x 75 slab foam, one off;
- Flammability (BS 5852 Source 1 to 5) 750 x 450 x 75 slab foam, two off; plus interliner (if applicable) 1500 x 1500 (or full roll width x 1500), two off; plus fabric 1500 x 1500 (or full roll width x 1500), two off.

The minimum size and number of **moulded foam** samples:

- This combination of tests is not available for moulded foam.

**6.3 Foam density only (AS 2282.3)**

The minimum size and number of **slab foam** samples:

- Density 380 x 380 x 50 slab foam, three off.

The minimum size and number of **moulded foam** samples:

- For Density 2 seat and 2 back foams.

**6.4 Foam flammability only (AS/NZS 4088.1)**

The minimum size and number of **slab foam** samples:

- Flammability (AS/NZS 4088.1) 450 x 450 x 75 slab foam, one off.

The minimum size and number of **moulded foam** samples:

- For Flammability 1 seat and 1 back foam.

**6.5 Foam flammability only (AS/NZS 4088.1 and BS 5852 Source X)**

The minimum size and number of **slab foam** (and fabric) samples:

- Flammability (AS/NZS 4088.1) 450 x 450 x 75 slab foam, one off;
- Flammability (BS 5852 Source 1 to 5) 750 x 450 x 75 slab foam, two off; plus interliner (if applicable) 1500 x 1500 (or full roll width x 1500), two off; plus fabric 1500 x 1500 (or full roll width x 1500), two off.

The minimum size and number of **moulded foam** samples:

- This combination of tests is not available for moulded foam.

## **7 Blue Tick Certification Renewal**

Original testing and Blue Tick certification renewal have same sample requirements (see section 6 above).

## **8 Timing**

Assuming there are no problems and that staff and equipment are available, foam testing usually takes around five working days (including conditioning).

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## **Furntech-AFRDI Testing Information Kit – Commercial Furniture Foams**

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When the sample, the Testing Request form and payment are all received, the item will be placed on the testing schedule.

### **9 Freight**

The outside of the packaging should be marked:

Furntech-AFRDI Reference number (if known)  
DELIVER TO Furntech-AFRDI  
SCHOOL ROAD (UNIVERSITY CAMPUS)  
NEWNHAM TASMANIA 7248

### **PLEASE MARK THE MODEL NAME/NUMBER ON EACH SAMPLE BEFORE DISPATCH.**

The name should match that used on the Testing Request Form. To assist with matching samples with the Testing Request forms, please attach a copy of the Testing Request form to each set of samples.

### **10 Payment**

Furntech-AFRDI policy is that **PAYMENT MUST BE MADE BEFORE TESTING COMMENCES**. Please phone 03 6326 6155 to request an invoice if this will help to facilitate payment. Facilities are available for payment by Visa and MasterCard.

### **11 The Next Step**

If you wish to proceed with testing, please follow these steps:

- 1 copy the Testing Request form and complete it for each sample foam, fax one copy to Furntech-AFRDI and attach a copy to the sample;
- 2 mark the name of the company and the model name/number on each sample; and
- 3 calculate payment required from the price list at the front of this paper and send your payment to Furntech-AFRDI (we also take Visa, Bankcard and MasterCard). Please phone 03 6326 6155 to request an invoice if this will help to facilitate payment

### **12 Confidentiality**

Testing conducted at Furntech-AFRDI is absolutely confidential. The Institute's procedures prohibit the disclosure of the fact that an item is being tested and the results of any such testing without written permission.

To assist us to preserve the confidentiality of other customers, we request three working days notice of an intended visit to the Institute's laboratory.

### **13 Queries**

If you have any problems with any of this please phone Furntech-AFRDI on 03 6326 6155.

