

## FIRE SAFETY

Fire Safety regulations now heavily oven soft furnishing in the rental market carrying a hefty and potentially a prison sentence for non-compliance. To fully understand what to expect as a tenant and your obligations as a landlord please see below.

### A GUIDE TO THE FURNITURE AND FURNISHINGS (FIRE) SAFETY REGULATIONS

The regulations concerning furniture in rented properties have been tightened to apply to all accommodation available in the residential lettings market, as from 1st January 1997 Landlords letting residential property must ensure that all of their furniture is “fire resistant” to comply with the regulations, otherwise they will be committing a criminal offence. The penalty for this fence is a fine of up to £5,000 and/or six months imprisonment.

### WHAT DOES FIRE RESISTANT MEAN?

“fire-resistant” means that the furniture must pass the “ignitability test as well as the “cigarette test” and the “match test”.

This means that all suitable furniture must have -

- Covers which cannot be set alight by applying a lighted match to them
- Covers which do no ignite if a smouldering cigarette is applied
- Filling material which passes an ignitability test
- Permanent labelling proving that the item complies with the regulations

The filling must comply with the regulations as well as the covers, because it is the toxic fumes from the filling which are the cause of death. Any furniture manufactured prior to 1st January 1950 need not comply with the regulations, as the toxic substances were not used in manufacture prior to that date.

Period or antique furniture is therefore exempt.

### WHAT FURNITURE MUST COMPLY?

- 1- All upholstered furniture
- 2- Beds including bases, headboards of beds and mattresses
- 3- Sofa-beds, futons and other convertibles
- 4- Nursery and children’s furniture
- 5- Garden furniture which is suitable for use in a dwelling
- 6- Scatter cushions and seat pads
- 7- Pillows

### THE REGULATIONS DO NOT APPLY TO ITEMS SUCH AS:-

- 1- Antique furniture or any furniture made before 1950
- 2- Bed Clothes including duvets
- 3- Loose covers for mattresses
- 4- Pillowcases
- 5- Curtains
- 6- Carpets
- 7- Sleeping bags

Furniture and furnishings manufactured after the introduction of the regulations in 1989 should all have the attached labels. The labels required are very specific and they must be permanently attached. Swing labels/cardboard tags attached by the manufacturer are for the purchaser’s information only. They do not satisfy the requirements for labels seen on items in a rented property. Refer to illustrations of the required labels.

### CAN THE REGULATIONS BE AVOIDED? NO! IT IS AN OFFENCE TO:

- 1- Give the furniture to the tenant
- 2- Sell the furniture to the tenant
- 3- Obtain an indemnity from the tenant that they do not mind the furniture does not comply
- 4- To store the furniture so that the tenant can put it back in the premises
- 5- To leave the items of the inventory inferring that they do not exist