



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 28, 2015

CONTACT: Anne Hulick, 860-302-4861, [ahulick@cleanwater.org](mailto:ahulick@cleanwater.org)

## **Major Furniture Retailer Announces Phase Out of Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals**

### *Advocates Urge Other Leading Retailers to Adopt Timelines and Policies to Eliminate Harmful Chemicals*

Hartford, CT – The nation’s largest furniture retailer and manufacturer, Ashley Furniture, announced that, due to increasing consumer demand and a change in California’s flammability standard, they will be moving away from using toxic chemical flame retardants in their furniture.

[Mike Schade](#), Mind the Store campaign director for Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families said: “For years, consumers were saddled with very limited choices when they wanted to buy a couch or other foam-padded furniture that didn’t contain these harmful chemicals. Thankfully big retailers are beginning to remove toxic flame retardants. Eliminating toxic flame retardant chemicals makes our homes safer while improving our health and the health. The industry is responding, but with varying degrees of success to consumers. We urge other leading furniture retailers to adopt policies with clear timeframes to phase out these unnecessary and dangerous chemicals.”

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that major furniture retailers including Crate and Barrel, Room and Board, Williams-Sonoma (Pottery Barn, West Elm) have mostly eliminated chemicals known as toxic flame retardants from their furniture. They also reported that the Futon Shop, Scandinavian Designs and Walmart “have told vendors to stop adding flame retardants to furniture” and that Ashley Furniture, the largest furniture retailer and manufacturer in America, is “committed to designing furniture ... without the use of flame retardant chemicals.”

“We applaud Ashley Furniture for this announcement and yet, urge them to identify a date certain that their products will be free from these toxic chemicals.” stated **Anne Hulick, RN, MS, JD, Coordinator for the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut**. Coalition partners worked with national partners on the Mind the Store Campaign with Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families urging Ashley and other retailers to move in this direction, Hulick added.

The vast majority of couches and upholstered furniture across the U.S. contain high levels of toxic flame retardant chemicals. Since 1975, furniture foam sold across the U.S. has been laden with these substances to meet the standards of a California “technical bulletin” called TB117.

Despite being called “flame retardants,” research by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and other groups have found that these chemicals do not provide any fire safety benefit and instead, create more toxic smoke and are harmful to human health.

“As a former volunteer firefighter, nurse and parent of two young children, I couldn’t be more thrilled at this announcement,” stated **Jose Perez, RN, BSN and member of the Coalition**. “These chemicals are linked to cancers, impaired brain development and can disrupt hormones. They don’t retard flames and they don’t belong in our products!” Chemical flame retardants do not stay in the furniture. They migrate out and collect in indoor dust where they enter people’s bodies by being inhaled, ingested and touched. Some toxic flame retardants do not break down easily, and have been found to persist and travel to waterways and ecosystems virtually everywhere. Firefighters, who already have a higher risk of certain cancers, are exposed to these harmful chemicals in a fire, and the highly toxic byproducts that result when they burn.

While TB117 only applied to California, it soon became the industry standard in all 50 states. After years of advocacy by public health groups, TB-117 was revised at the direction of California Governor Jerry Brown to allow manufacturers to phase out toxic flame retardants without compromising fire safety. The policy was renamed TB117-2013 and became mandatory as of January 1, 2015. “While TB 117-2013 is a step in the right direction, it doesn’t mandate that chemical flame retardants aren’t used so we must continue to urge all retailers to stop using these harmful chemicals” added Hulick.

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