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To: **All Members**

Dear Brother / Sister

FBU Submission - Consultation on Domestic Upholstered Furniture

In August of this year, the Department for Business and Trade launched a consultation with the aim of revoking the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. The FBU has made a submission opposing their plans, which is attached to this circular.

The Furniture and Furnishings Regulations have improved fire safety over many decades. Research suggests that 50 to 70 lives a year have been saved. By reducing the flammability of domestic furniture, the regulations have also contributed to firefighter safety. The FBU campaigned for the regulations over several decades until they were introduced in 1988. The union has defended the regulations from earlier government attacks in 2014 and 2016.

The current regulations require domestic furniture manufacturers by law, to test for flammability. The Westminster government wants to scrap those mandatory tests and introduce a voluntary regime instead. Ministers say they will introduce a British Standard, but no text has been shared with the FBU or published. In any case, furniture manufacturers would get a free hand to organise their own tests and then sell furniture that may be hazardous.

Ministers claim the old regulations do not deal with new risks, such as lithium-ion batteries. They could create an additional test for those risks, but instead will remove mandatory testing altogether.

Ministers also claim that by scrapping the tests, they will deal with the toxic substances given off by flame retardants in furniture. Of course, this matters to firefighters. It is central to the FBU's DECON campaign to tackle firefighter cancers.

However, the old regulations did not prescribe flame retardants – they were introduced as the cheapest option by the furniture manufacturers. If ministers wanted to tackle flame retardants, they could either ban them or introduce testing for toxicity. In fact, their draft regulations will still allow flame retardants if manufacturers decide they are the most “practicable” solution.

The FBU regards these plans as more deregulation. It puts profits before firefighter and public safety. It is the same mistake they have made with the Fire Safety Order, the building regulations and other deregulation. They are repeating the same mistakes that led to the Grenfell Tower fire. Sadly, the NFCC have endorsed the new regime and failed to stand up for safety.

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The FBU will make its case to ministers, civil servants and other politicians. The union will continue with our DECON campaign. We will continue to defend our members' safety and public safety in every forum where we have a voice.

I ask that you read the submission, discuss it with other members on stations and in control rooms, and challenge principal managers to take a stand for safety.

Yours in unity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Selby', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ben Selby
Assistant General Secretary

Attach. X 1 – FBU Submission

BS/jh