



CONDUCT A SAFE STAGE SHOW & BE HASSLE-FREE ON ISSUES OF FLAME RETARDANCY FOR YOUR SOFT GOODS

An ounce of prevention will save pounds of corrective measures

Rule #1: Get to know your local fire marshal.

Discover and contact the authority that will have judgment over the

Acceptance of your scenery. This person may be the facility manager or house manager, an officer at the local firehouse, or a prevention officer from Fire Department Headquarters. Public Life Safety weighs heavily on their shoulders and they do not like surprises. Rather, they will be thrilled and most cooperative since you approached them in advance to discover the local requirements and to arrange pre-approvals.

Rule #2: If you skip rule #1, you are wasting your time on the following rules.

Rule #3: Require vendor documentation on all your FR fabric purchases.

Your supplier should give you, at a minimum, an original copy of their certificate (affidavit) of flame retardancy for the fabrics you purchase. The supplier should have backup documentation for any claims made in the certificate. Upon special request, they should be willing to give you copies of manufacturers' certificates, lab test results, and the MSDS sheets on chemical additives. In order to protect sources, vendors may request that they send these documents directly to your fire marshal.

Believable documentation should be all that you need. Since the results of controlled testing (in a lab with the proper test chamber) are the basis for these documents, most fire marshals know to rely on documentation before and over any field (match) testing.

Rule #4: Any additions to fabrics must be flame resistant.

Any chemical that will absorb into the fabric or sit on the surface of the fabric must also be flame resistant. This includes paints, dyes, and gesso. If you are not sure about the flame resistance properties of a treatment, then paint or treat a sample and do a flame test upon drying. See rule #6 below.

Appliqués, such as trim, tassels and fringe should be flame resistant as well. Pre-treated items are difficult to source, however, so you may need to apply your own treatment. Enforcement of FR rules to curtain appliqués is spotty, but has been growing—so do not leave your production exposed to a costly surprise.

Dust and air-borne oils are "additives" you must avoid. These items are highly combustible and will diminish the natural or treated resistance of your fabrics.

Keep curtains and scenery clean. If dirtied, dry cleaning should restore the FR properties to an acceptable level. Washing of IFR fabrics will likely increase flame resistance. Any water washing of treated fabrics requires new FR treatment.

Rule #5: Know your substrates.

If you have fabrics that are not sufficiently flame resistant, then you need to know what the fiber content is so you can consider a treatment. Your supplier needs to be able to provide you with that information.

Rule #6: Pretest your fabrics.

Your documentation may be complete, but do not accept the supply chain without some skepticism. Spot-check any IFR and FR components using a match test (see summary on separate sheet).

If treating your own fabrics and substrates, test a sample of the application first, and then do the treatment to the scenery.

Rule #7: Document any treatments on fabrics.

Keep a dated log of what you do to your scenery with regard to flame retardancy. The logbook should have technical notes about any chemicals (including MSDS sheets) you used. The container label usually will have the information you need and will suffice as documentation. Enter a brief description of how you applied a treatment and sign and date your entries.

Rule #8: Know the effective period of all treatments.

Flame resistant treatments have a limited time of effectiveness. Depending on environmental factors, this period can be short or quite lengthy. The rule of thumb is to conduct testing on an annual basis. Therefore, the logbook (see rule #7) should also record the purchase date of fabrics and curtains and the results of any field- testing.

Following these guidelines should keep you and your productions out of trouble and moving without costly interruption.