



RESIDENTIAL MATTRESSES: A DEADLY FIRE HAZARD

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ANAPOL SCHWARTZ ATTY OFFERS TIPS TO PROTECT YOU/YOUR HOME

PHILADELPHIA — Many of us are literally sleeping on potential fire-bombs in our homes, says [Anapol Schwartz](#) products safety attorney/consumer rights advocate [Miriam Benton Barish](#). Unbeknownst to most people the polyurethane foam typically used in conventional mattresses as padding, is often described by fire experts as “solid gasoline.”

Fires involving mattresses (as the first ignited item) are one the leading reasons for fire deaths in U.S. households, annually claiming 380 lives, 1580 injuries, and resulting in \$104 million in property damages, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Last year in July 2007, the CPSC enacted the new Federal Mattress Flammability Standard, known as 16 CFR 1633. This revised standard will reduce the known hazards caused by polyurethane foam used in residential mattresses, a material that once ignited causes fires to engulf rooms within minutes and release fatal gases. A burning mattress can reach 1,000 kilowatts of heat in under five minutes. When that happens “flashover” can occur, a deadly situation when the heat from the fire ignites everything in the room, typically at temperatures between 1100 and 1470 degrees Fahrenheit. The new CPSC standard requires the heat emitted by a mattress fire stay at 200 kilowatts for 30 minutes.



[Miriam Benton Barish](#) concentrates her practice in products liability and toxic torts. She handles her clients with compassion while vigorously advocating on their behalf.



This new mandatory standard is designed to reduce the severity of mattress fires ignited by open flame sources such as candles, matches and lighters.

The federal open flame standard does not address ignition from cigarettes because that protection is already required. A mandatory federal standard on cigarette ignition of mattresses, 16 CFR Part 1632, has been in place for more than 30 years.

Under the new mandatory federal regulations mattress manufacturers must meet the new fire performance standard to ensure that if a mattress is involved in a fire, it will generate a fire much smaller in size, and with a slower growth rate, allowing occupants more time to discover the fire and escape. Mattress manufacturers can comply with this standard by selecting a fabric either resistant to smoldering, or provide a barrier layer between the foam filler and the fabric which is both smolder and flame retardant. But, the new regulations don't mandate flame-retardants in the foam itself (as Great Britain does), even though there's minimal cost to do this and it's been proven to save more lives, according to Barish.

"The federal government has known about the hazards of polyurethane foam and the need for safety standards for more than three decades. So, it's incomprehensible that it has allowed the mattress industry to manufacture highly flammable products that have claimed thousands upon thousands of lives," stresses Barish, who recently represented a family whose two year old son was catastrophically injured in a fire in their home that resulted in a significant confidential settlement with the mattress manufacturer and the component suppliers for their failure to provide any flame retardants or barrier in the fabric or foam of the mattress.



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If you have questions, please call us toll-free at **1-866-735-2792**. Thank you.



Founded in 1977, Anapol, Schwartz, Weiss, Cohan, Feldman & Smalley is a personal injury firm with [law offices in Philadelphia, Media, Reading and Harrisburg, Pa., as well as Cherry Hill, N.J.](#) and more than 30 attorneys.

The firm has a multi-faceted practice with a tradition of excellence in medical malpractice law, pharmaceutical mass tort, medical device matters, toxic tort, class actions, products liability, automobile, investor claims and wrongful termination litigation.

While the revised standards will improve newly manufactured mattresses, consumers need to be aware of the potential danger in their existing mattresses and how to be safe going forward. Barish argues that consumers can take some life-savings steps now, to protect themselves, their families and their homes.

Do Your Homework.

Before you purchase that mattress, read the label. The rule became effective July 1, 2007 and applies to all mattress sets manufactured in the United States or imported in to the United States on or after that date. Old mattresses that do not meet this standard can legally continue to be sold in retail stores. Ensure that the mattress label states it is in compliance with 16 CFR 1633 federal flammability (open flame) standard for mattress sets when used without a foundation or with a foundation.

Keep Your Distance.

Ensure all possible ignition sources, candles, cigarettes, etc., are kept clear of the mattresses at all times and that the mattress is not positioned too close to any heat sources, such as activated electrical appliances like hair styling devices, portable heaters, electric blankets.

Get Out, Don't Put It Out.

Most people are not aware of the extreme hazard of a mattress fire. Tragically, many deaths occur as occupants attempt in vain to put out these fires. They don't realize that these fires grow exceeding quickly; thick black smoke makes it impossible to see clearly, and the gases emitted, carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide, can incapacitate and kill you in a matter of minutes.

See how rapidly a fire can spread at http://www.anapolschwartz.com/videos/products_liability.shtml