Interliners and *flame-retardant* upholstery: three routes

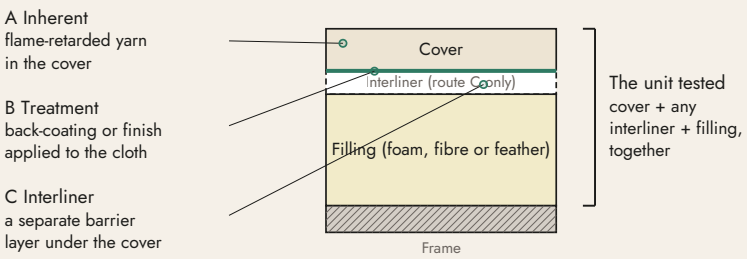
The three routes to a fire-tested upholstery composite, what each changes and what to ask the supplier to prove.

Compliance guidance. This is guidance, not legal or fire safety advice. It rests on the FIRA and British Furniture Confederation guide (2010) and Schedule 3 of the 1988 Regulations, both read on 7 November 2026; the British Standards were not read. The fire level comes from the Responsible Person, and any claim that a cloth passes without treatment or an interliner needs a test report for the whole composite. A fire safety consultant or the test house should settle doubtful cases.

AT A GLANCE

Route	How the fire resistance is reached	Water soak before the test	What to ask
A. Inherent	The fibre or yarn is itself flame retardant (the guide's example: cloth woven from flame-retarded yarns)	None, provided no additional treatment is applied (A1.2)	Ask for the cloth's own composite report and for written confirmation that nothing further was applied
B. Treated or back-coated	A flame-retardant treatment, back-coating included, applied to a finished cover	30-minute water soak before conditioning and testing (A1.2)	Ask how the treatment survives the cleaning the cloth will get, and see the mock-up for handle and drape
C. Interliner	A separate layer of fire-retardant material between cover and filling (the guide's definition)	A treated interliner or fire barrier is soaked too (A1.2)	Ask for the interliner named in the composite record and the report, and see it in the approved sample
Treatment not known	The supplier cannot say	Cover is water soaked and dried (A1.2)	Treat as B until the supplier states the route in writing

Section numbers are from the FIRA and British Furniture Confederation guide (2010) read on 7 November 2026. The effects on handle, shape and cleaning are questions to put to the supplier, not findings: no source read gives figures.



Schematic cross-section, not to scale. Original drawing.

Cross-section of a seat showing where each route sits. Schematic and not to scale. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

REMEMBER

- The test is on the composite: cover, any interliner and filling together.
- Ask the supplier to state the route in writing, then check the report names it.
- No cloth passes without a report for the composite.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

ROUTE AND COMPOSITE

Each upholstered item achieves [BS 7176:2007+A1:2011 / current edition] [Medium] Hazard by route [A inherent / B treated or back-coated / C interliner / combination]. [Supplier] states the route per item in the composite record: cover [ref], treatment [none / back-coating, supplier], interliner [none / ref, supplier], filling [type, grade] for the seat, back and arms.

EVIDENCE

[Supplier] provides, before production, a test report for each composite from a laboratory accredited for the methods used, dated within [12] months, whose specimen description is identical to the composite record. Where the cover or interliner is treated, the report records the water soak. Reports for the cloth alone, the foam alone or the interliner alone are not accepted.

HANDLE, SHAPE AND CLEANING

The approved sample and mock-up are made with the production composite, route applied. [Designer] approves handle, drape, colour and seat shape on that sample. [Supplier] states the cleaning method permitted for the cover, whether it was included in the test, and whether the treatment can be renewed after cleaning and by whom.

CHANGE CONTROL

A change of cover (other than colour), pattern or construction, filling, interliner, treatment or component supplier after approval is a new model: [supplier] notifies [designer] in writing before the change and provides a new test report before it is used.

TERMS USED

Interliner

A thin fire-resistant layer placed between the cover and the filling so a seat passes the fire test even when the cover or foam would not alone. It changes how the cover sits, so it must be in the sample.

Inherently flame retardant (IFR)

A fabric whose fire resistance comes from the fibre or yarn itself, so it does not wash out or need a coating. A fabric woven from flame-retarded yarns is the usual example.

Back-coating

A flame-retardant layer applied to the back of a cloth. Because it is a treatment, the finished cover has to go through a water-soak step before the fire test.

Water soak

A test step where a treated cover is soaked for thirty minutes and dried before the fire test, to show the flame retardant does not simply wash out. Required for treated covers; not for inherently FR yarns with no extra treatment.

Upholstery composite

The exact combination of cover, interliner and filling that was tested together. A fire certificate only applies to that combination, so changing the foam or cover can make it invalid.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- FIRA and British Furniture Confederation guide (2010): 48-page PDF read 7 Nov 2026: definitions, 7.1.1, 7.2.2, Appendix 1 A1.1 to A1.3.
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, Schedule 3: revised text read 7 Nov 2026: interliner test; amended 1 Oct 2010.
- BS 7176; BS 5852; BS EN 1021-1 and -2; BS 5651: not read; statuses on our report sheet (BSI listings read 5 Nov 2026). Confirm against current editions.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/interliners-and-flame-retardant-upholstery. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.