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PFAS Regulatory Changes: What You Need to Know

Over the past few years, increased attention has been paid to a group of chemical compounds commonly referred to as PFAS. The concern around PFAS has initially mainly been centered around drinking water contamination, but has grown to more widespread exposure, due to increased use in a variety of consumer products, including performance textiles.

Below are some commonly asked questions – and answers - about PFAS.

What are PFAS chemicals?

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), often referred to as Fluorocarbons, are a large, complex group of manufactured chemicals that are ingredients in various everyday products. PFAS molecules have a chain of linked carbon and fluorine atoms. Because the carbon-fluorine bond is one of the strongest, these chemicals do not degrade easily in the environment.

What type of products are PFAS commonly used in?

PFAS are used in a wide range of consumer and industrial products. Some of the most common uses are non-stick cookware, stain and water-repellent clothing, stain-repellent carpeting, performance upholstery textiles, packaging, as well fire extinguishing foam. PFAS are used in industries such as aerospace, automotive, construction, and electronics.

The American Chemistry Council, a trade organization, noted that thousands of different types of PFAS chemicals are currently being used in a variety of products and industries, and that alternative materials may not be immediately available to replace them.

Why is there concern around PFAS?

Persistence: PFAS are long-lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time. Due to their persistence in the environment they have become known as ‘Forever Chemicals’.

Exposure: PFAS are used in a wide range of products globally, with many opportunities for human exposure.

Health Effects: While it is still unclear to which extent PFAS are harmful to human health, and if all of the many types of PFAS are harmful, some scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAS in the environment may be linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals.

How does this affect the Upholstery Textile / Furniture industry?

PFAS have been commonly used as stain and water-repellents in performance upholstery textiles for many years. There are PFAS-free alternatives available, but many have proven not to be as effective, particularly for oil based stains.

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Is the use of PFAS chemicals being outlawed?

According to Safer States Bill Tracker there are currently 31 states with legislative efforts focused on the reduction of PFAS. Most of these current bills relate to drinking water, food packaging, apparel, infant and juvenile related items.

There are four states with current legislation related to stain repellents used in furniture and upholstery textiles. These four states are:

STATE	LEGISLATIVE STAGE	ESTIMATED TIMING
California	Assembly Bill 1817	January 1, 2025
Maine	Public Law 477	January 1, 2030*
Massachusetts	House Bill 4818	January 1, 2030
Minnesota	House Bill 3180	January 1, 2024

In general, these Bills/Laws read: “Prohibits the sales or distribution of carpets, rugs, fabric treatments, upholstered furniture, or textile furnishings that contain perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl chemicals.” *It is important to note that the first state has a Law against the sale of upholstered furniture to date is Maine.

The law actually has two phases, the first phase is requiring a disclosure statement be supplied to the State of Maine for any company that ships products containing PFAS into the state of Maine. This requirement goes into effect on January 1, 2023. The second phase, which prohibits the sale of furniture with PFAS, is scheduled to be fully implemented January 1, 2030.

How is Nassimi reacting to new legislation regarding PFAS?

As in the past, with the removal of Phthalates from faux leathers, or flame-retardant chemicals from all upholstery materials, Nassimi is not waiting to react to regulation, but has been at the forefront of advancements in sustainable performance upholstery materials. The majority of products are (and have always been) PFAS free.

Which Nassimi Patterns are already PFAS Free?

The following product categories have always been PFAS free:

Supreen® Liquid Barrier Fabrics
Writer's Block™ Super-Stain Polyurethane
Resilience Faux Leather
SiO™ Performance Silicone
Performance Wool Fabric

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Will Nassimi Products that contain PFAS be reformulated to be PFAS Free?

The stain repellent finish that had been used on most of the Resilience TX patterns is based on conventionally used fluorocarbon chemistry. Nassimi has tested and evaluated PFAS free alternatives for some time, and has converted all new production of Resilience TX fabrics to be PFAS-Free, with the goal of having converted all inventory by 2024.

All Resilience TX patterns that were introduced in 2022, such as Beekman Velvet or Carlisle, are already PFAS free.

Does being PFAS Free mean sacrificing performance?

Typically, yes. Most upholstery textiles, that are conventionally produced, but simply using an PFAS free water-repellent, have proven to be less effective in repelling stains, particularly oil-based ones. That said, there are true performance options available. There are PFAS-free alternatives that offer highly effective stain protection, that are produced using state of the art technology in the finishing process.

As an example, Supreen® liquid barrier fabrics use a silicone-based stain repellent, that is applied following a patented fabric-purification process, that allows for the silicone to fully embed itself into the textiles' fiber to create an invisible layer of stain protection. With Supreen® fabrics there is no need to sacrifice performance for the sake of sustainability.

Likewise, the surface treatments of Writer's Block polyurethanes, SiO silicones, and Resilience faux leathers, provide exceptional stain resistance, without the use of any harmful chemicals.