



## Flame retardants & fire safety

Flame retardants are used in many products to retard the flame, either prevent a fire from taking hold or reduce the spread of fire. The use of flame retardants is critical when it comes to escaping from fires in the homes giving more escape time, thus of particular importance for the elderly, children and vulnerable groups.

Flame retardants give up to **15 times more** additional escaping time. In practice, this would mean for example that when a non-flame retarded TV catches fire and gives only 2 minute escape time, the flame retarded one can provide up to 30 minutes escape time. This should allow sufficient time for the fire brigade to reach your place before it is too late.

### Why do we need Flame Retardants?

If you look around your home or office, you will see that we live with everyday items and products such as furniture and electronic equipment which are synthetic and flammable. Think of all the [consumer products](#) such as your TV, computer, even the chair you are sitting on. All of them could accidentally catch fire because of a burning candle, cigarette or match as each of them could be a significant fuel for a fire started elsewhere in the room.

- In terms of fire hazard, the plastics which are contained in a typical TV set are equivalent to 6 liters of petrol in your living room.
- Almost 1 in 10 UK fires in homes are caused by electronics equipment and /or electrical wiring (The Times 13/05/2003, "The major causes of domestic fires in 2002 in UK")

### Flame Retardants are saving lives

Flame retardants contribute everyday to saving multiple lives as they reduce the likelihood that products will catch fire and if they do ignite the flame retardants slow the spread of fire.

- In 2000 in the US, more than 4,000 fire deaths were estimated to be avoided thanks to the use of brominated flame retardants according to an industry evaluation under the [VCCEP \(Voluntary Children's Chemical Evaluation Program\)](#).
- In Europe, the European Commission has estimated a 20% reduction of fire deaths as a result of the use of flame retardants in the last 10 years.
- In the United Kingdom alone, government scientists have estimated that more than 3,000 lives were saved in the period from 1988 – 2000 as a result of flame retardants. The UK

Furniture [Fire Safety Regulations](#) from 1988 provide the UK consumer with the highest levels of fire safety protection in the world.