

## FIVE COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FLAME RETARDANCY

After nearly eight years at Sew What?, I have become the resident expert on the subject of flame retardancy. Over those years, I have encountered numerous questions from customers and potential customers regarding flame retardancy, and I am always happy to assist. However, during that same time frame, I have also discovered a number of misconceptions about the subject. I thought I'd address the five most common misconceptions.

1) *I don't need to have my drapes checked for flame retardancy. It's not my problem.*

When drapes are being used in any public space, whether it is a theatre, a school, a restaurant, or any other "public gathering place," it is the responsibility of the owner or user of the drapes to take appropriate steps to ensure that the public is safe while frequenting the space. This includes ensuring that the drapery meets requirements for flame retardancy. Otherwise, the best case scenario is a Fire Marshal may require you to remove the drapes. The worst case scenario is that there could be a fire...

2) *A flame certificate is good forever.*

A [Certificate of Flame Retardancy](#) is typically only good for one year. After that year, it is the responsibility of the owner/user of the drapes to confirm that the drapes remain flame retardant.

3) *I am just using the drapes once, so they don't need to be flame retardant.*

Whether drapes are being used for a long-term permanent installation or just for a one-time, single-day event, they always must be certified as flame retardant. You never know when a fire could break out.

4) *IFR (Inherently Flame Retardant) means that the fabric will be flame retardant forever, no matter what.*

Not necessarily. While a fabric that has been certified as "inherently flame retardant" or "permanently flame retardant" or "durably flame retardant" is intended to remain flame retardant for the life of the fabric, environmental conditions can affect that "permanent" flame retardancy. For example, a drape that has been hanging for a long time without maintenance may accumulate a heavy layer of dust on the drape. You may not realize this, but dust is full of all kinds of flammable matter – so although the fabric (technically) is permanently flame retardant, the drape may become flammable.

5) *No retesting is needed, especially not for IFR fabrics.*

I recommend (and many Fire Marshals require) annual re-testing of all FR fabrics (including IFR/PFR/DFR) to ensure that the drapes remain flame retardant. A certified testing company should always be used, and assuming that the drapery passes the test, a Certificate of Conformance (similar to a Certificate of Flame Retardancy) should be provided by the testing company.