



BIFMA PC-2018
BIFMA Product Conformance Requirements

Business & Institutional Furniture
Manufacturers Association

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

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Randy Ruster	Engineering Committee Chair	Herman Miller
Melissa DuBuis	Engineering Committee Vice-Chair	Steelcase
	Panels Subcommittee Chair	
	Small Office / Home Office Subcommittee Chair	
Desmond Noteboom	Panels Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Haworth
Amy Kruse	Small Office / Home Office Subcom. Vice-Chair	Sauder
John Krust	Seating Subcommittee Chair	National Office Furniture
Chris Zorich	Seating Subcommittee Vice-Chair	HON
Tom Dykstra	Files/Storage Subcommittee Chair	Haworth
	Flammability Subcommittee Vice-Chair	
Steve Trinkel	Desk/Table Subcommittee Chair	Kimball
	Files/Storage Subcommittee Vice-Chair	
	Furniture Emissions Subcommittee Vice-Chair	
Jerry Nichols	Desk/Table Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Versteel
Randy Carter	Furniture Emissions Subcommittee Chair	Steelcase
	Building Codes Subcommittee Vice-Chair	
John Norton	International Subcommittee Chair	Herman Miller
Jeff Musculus	International Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Steelcase
Casey VanWinkle	Healthcare Furniture Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Kimball
Lucy Hart	Ergonomics Subcommittee Chair	Global
Teresa Bellingar	Ergonomics Subcommittee Vice-Chair	Haworth
Robert Hupe	Flammability Subcommittee Chair	Virco
Dave VanDyke	Building Codes Subcommittee Chair	Herman Miller

In addition, several members of the BIFMA Board of Directors were active in setting the direction for this document including BIFMA General Counsel.

Table of Contents	Page
1. Purpose	3
2. Scope	3
3. Definitions.....	3
4. References.....	4
5. Background and Assumptions.....	4
6. Product Conformance Requirements	6
7. Conformity Assessments for BIFMA G1 Ergonomic Guidelines	7
8. General.....	8
9. Disclaimers	8

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide minimum requirements for claiming product conformance to BIFMA standards. Companies making product claims of conformance for BIFMA standards shall follow these requirements when making conformance statements. Customers who buy products that are declared by the manufacturer to be BIFMA compliant should be confident that any individual product they purchase would pass the appropriate BIFMA tests.

2. Scope

This requirements document applies to all products declared as being in conformance with ANSI/BIFMA mechanical performance standards and the BIFMA G1 Ergonomics Guideline.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 ANSI (American National Standards Institute): The Institute oversees the creation, promulgation and use of thousands of norms and standards that directly impact businesses in nearly every sector. ANSI is also actively engaged in accreditation - assessing the competence of organizations determining conformance to standards
- 3.2 BIFMA (Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturer's Association); The commercial furniture industry's Trade Association. BIFMA gathers and reports on industry statistics, takes an advocacy position on issues (product and business regulations, business policy, legal matters, etc.) that have broad industry impact/benefit and develops and promulgates minimum industry safety and performance standards for office and institutional furnishings. BIFMA is an ANSI-accredited standards developer and many BIFMA standards are developed and approved through the ANSI process and bear the "ANSI/BIFMA" designation as part of the title of most standards.
- 3.3 Conformance: The state of having the appropriate procedures, programs and processes in place to ensure that any given group of products (product-offering) meet the minimum performance requirements defined by this document. Conformance is often referred to as "compliance".
- 3.4 Conformity Assessment: The process for demonstrating that products meet standards, regulations and other specifications necessary to allow statements of product compliance.
- 3.5 GSA (General Services Administration): US Federal Government Agency responsible for establishing purchasing policies and requirements pertaining to the procurement of products within Government facilities.
- 3.6 Testing Program: The process of planning, procuring, and performing the testing required for conformance.

4. References

- 4.1 BIFMA standards: <http://www.bifma.org/?page=standardsoverview>
- 4.2 ISO/IEC 17025 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories
- 4.3 ISO/IEC 17050-1 Conformity assessment – Supplier’s declaration of conformity – Part 1: General requirements
- 4.4 ISO/IEC 17067 Conformity assessment – Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes
- 4.5 BIFMA Website Standards FAQ “Testing to Revised ANSI/BIFMA Mechanical Standards”
- 4.6 BIFMA Website Standards FAQ “Worst-Case Testing”
- 4.7 BIFMA Website Standards FAQ “Loss of Serviceability Guideline”

5. Background and Assumptions

5.1 BIFMA Conformance

Many customers seek or require conformance to BIFMA standards as part of requests for proposals (RFP), bid packages, and/or as a contractual requirement associated with their purchase (GSA, for example).

Historically, it has been left up to individual manufacturers, or in some cases, independent test laboratories or certification agencies, to determine when a product (or product line) complies with a standard based on the testing requirements given in the standard.

5.2 Customer Requirements

Some customers will have requirements regarding which standards apply to specific product types, or minimum age of test reports or time windows for "recertifying" when a revised standard is issued (or both), but generally do not specify exact conformance requirements.

5.3 Test Plan Creation

Proving conformance requires testing. Test plans should be determined by experienced personnel with engineering and/or testing experience. The general tenet of any testing program is that upon successful completion, it is expected that any product within the product line would pass the required tests.

5.3.1 Worst Case Testing

In determining a test plan, it is typical that "worst-case" products are tested that are representative of the full offering. This is common practice as it is impractical to expect that every product type, option, finish type, textile, etc., be tested. BIFMA includes worst-case guidelines in each standard that are helpful in test planning. In general, worst-case products are the largest product (have the greatest load-bearing capability, have the greatest loading moments, and/or have the greatest spans between support structures or provide the greatest tipping potential). However, the largest product may have additional support structures,

reinforcement or "footprint" which make them more robust, so a smaller product may be "worst-case". Regardless of the guidance given, good engineering judgment must be applied to making these determinations. This judgment must consider the design and materials used in the products, the manufacturing processes and variations, quality control measures applied, etc. Often several models must be tested to ensure all worst-case scenarios are evaluated. For example, to demonstrate compliance to the Arm Strength test method, a seating product with both fixed arm and adjustable arm option(s) would need to have both arm types tested to prove compliance.

5.3.2 Samples required

BIFMA standards do not require multiple samples or indicate test reliability. When creating test plans, a single product (test sample) may be used for multiple tests. This is acceptable, but not required. For durability tests, especially, it is common practice to utilize a single product through a sequence of individual tests; such test sequences are often performed until the product does not meet the acceptance levels of a given a test. If this occurs the failing test result shall be disregarded and that test rerun using a new test sample before continuing the test sequence. For example, if a product is found not to meet the requirement in test 9 of 12, a new sample can be tested to assure conformance to test 9 before completing the test sequence 10-12 on the new sample.

In many cases, static proof load testing may cause damage that would impact the outcome of subsequent tests and that sample may not be useable for further testing.

5.3.3 Testing Frequency

Even if no changes are made to the product or the reference standard, testing should be repeated on a regular basis to confirm ongoing conformance. The frequency of testing depends on volume of product produced, quality and manufacturing controls in place to assure consistent product performance, regulatory requirements, customer complaint and warranty history, among other factors.

5.4 Process Control

A manufacturer should have procedures/processes in place to ensure that:

- formal records exist to support declarations of conformance
- quality systems (procedures and instructions) are in place to ensure that product, material, dimensional and/or supplier changes are controlled in a manner that reasonably assures ongoing compliance to product requirements
- manufacturing facilities follow documented processes (utilization of ISO 9001 Quality Management System requirements is one acceptable method)
- manufacturers who have reason to believe their product or process is not resulting in consistent compliant outcomes shall take additional steps beyond the scope of this document to regain confidence

6. Product Conformance Requirements

A declaration of conformance to ANSI/BIFMA standards or guidelines assures that a product line has had representative products tested/evaluated and has been found to meet all the applicable requirements of the standard. Any product for which a manufacturer makes a BIFMA conformance declaration shall:

- 6.1 Comply with this Product Conformance Requirements document.
- 6.2 Meet the most recent version of the applicable BIFMA standard for that product line. If the most recent version is less than 3 years old, it is acceptable to meet the prior version.
- 6.3 Have an established test plan and ensure all worst-case product is tested.
- 6.4 Have product tested that is representative of standard production products (manufactured by standard production processes and materials).

Note: For products requiring assembly by the purchaser or end user, assembly instructions shall be available specifying assembly requirements, configuration requirements and/or any applicable use instructions or warnings. The testing entity shall adhere to these instructions in assembling test products and/or in determining test configurations.

- 6.5 Be tested in an ISO 17025 accredited lab that includes the applicable ANSI/BIFMA standards in its scope of accreditation.

Note: The requirement to test with an accredited lab is effective January 1, 2021. After this date, claims of conformance shall have accredited test results.

- 6.5.1 For New Products or Products Undergoing First-time Conformance Testing: Perform each applicable test method.
- 6.5.2 For Changes to Existing Products: At a minimum, perform the test methods of the referenced standard that would reasonably assess the change.

The entity that makes a conformance claim shall:

- 6.6 Address any failures by first analyzing and assessing the failure (see 5.3.2 for testing guidance).
 - 6.6.1 If the assessment concludes the test was invalid because of faulty test setup or execution of the test, or other correctable assignable cause, the test shall be repeated
 - 6.6.2 If the assessment concludes the underlying product and processes are fully reliable and the failure was likely due to a sample anomaly, a minimum of two additional samples shall be tested and both must pass without exception. An additional failure likely means the product/processes are not fully reliable and the product design and/or processes need to be revised per 6.6.3.

6.6.3 If the assessment concludes the failure was due to a product issue, the product or process shall be modified. These modifications should be based on, engineering and production expertise and judgment. Product testing is required to verify the revision conforms to the ANSI/BIFMA standards. Multiple samples should be tested as an extra level of assurance that conformance has been achieved.

6.7 Determine when a change to a product requires retesting to assure continuing conformance.

6.7.1 Whenever changes in materials, constructions, sizes, fasteners, adhesives and/or processing occur, the responsible entity shall determine whether retesting is needed.

6.7.2 Upon successful validation of the product's performance, conformity declaration can be updated.

6.8 Determine when retesting is required due to a revised standard.

6.8.1 When a standard that affects existing declarations of conformance is revised, a determination of the conformance status for the affected products shall be made.

6.8.2 Confirmation of the conformance statement should be completed after publication of revised standards, not to exceed 3 years.

6.8.3 Upon successful validation of the product's performance, the conformity declaration can be updated.

6.9 Conduct routine testing at documented intervals to assure ongoing conformance to the reference standard. A maximum test interval of 5 years is recommended, but it could be longer or shorter depending on manufacturing process controls, customer complaints, standard revision cycle etc.

6.10 Maintain test reports to support declarations of conformance. Recommended minimum retention period is 15 years.

7. Conformity Assessments for BIFMA G1 Ergonomic Guidelines

Declarations of Conformance for the BIFMA Ergonomic Guidelines: Due to the unique complexity of the seating guidelines, especially relative to sizes and adjustments, declarations of conformance may be made based on "families" of products (product lines) and the ability of a chair to adjust to meet the given adjustment ranges within the guideline. In this case, declarations of conformance shall be based on the product's measured dimensions, ability to adjust and the customer's proper specification at the time of order. In the case of the Ergonomics Guideline, declarations of conformance are not meant to indicate any given (individual) product will meet all dimensional ranges, but rather that with proper specification, one or more models in the same product line are available to satisfy the dimensions given in the guideline. Declarations of conformance should contain appropriate caveats to avoid misunderstandings of product performance.

8. General

- 8.1 Membership in the BIFMA organization is independent from product conformance. BIFMA membership does not guarantee conformance to the BIFMA standard and does not automatically confer the right to declare conformance. BIFMA and non-BIFMA members may claim conformance for a particular product if they comply with these requirements and their product complies with the applicable BIFMA standard.
- 8.2 BIFMA does not test products nor does BIFMA track or monitor test conformance. Manufacturers shall not state, “BIFMA Approved”, “BIFMA Certified”, or “BIFMA Tested” in conformance claims.
- 8.3 The BIFMA logo is not intended to accompany conformance claims and shall not be used.
- 8.4 BIFMA does not recommend specific testing laboratories or certification bodies to use when making conformance claims, but maintains a list of Test Labs in its database.
- 8.5 If a product meets all applicable requirements, then the responsible entity may issue a declaration of conformance, which must include the applicable standard and revision year. One example conformance statement is “*Meets ANSI/BIFMA X5.1-2017*”.
- 8.6 In the case of any discrepancy between this document and the referenced standard, the referenced standard shall prevail.

9. Disclaimers

- 9.1 BIFMA is not an ANSI accredited product certification body. As stated above, BIFMA does not certify compliance with BIFMA standards. BIFMA is not liable for, and has no duty or obligation to verify, confirm or otherwise investigate, any claims of product conformance made by any manufacturer.
- 9.2 The BIFMA Product Conformance Requirements and BIFMA standards (collectively, “Requirements and Standards”) consist of voluntary guidelines and standards. The user is solely responsible for determining compliance with the Requirements and Standards and shall be solely responsible for any claims of conformance. By making use of any information in the Requirements and Standards, the user agrees that in no event shall BIFMA or any of its representatives be liable to the user, the user’s representatives, or the end-user of the product for any damages, including without limitation for consequential, incidental, indirect, special, exemplary, punitive or enhanced damages, lost profits, diminution in value, arising out of or relating to, and/or in connection with any use of the Requirements and Standards or any claims of conformance thereto.
- 9.3 The Requirements and Standards are provided for informational purposes. It is the user’s responsibility to evaluate and independently determine whether the Requirements and Standards are appropriate for a particular product.
- 9.4 No express or implied warranties of any type, including for example implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose, are made with respect to the information, or any use of the information, in these Requirements and Standards.