

# Addressing some important safety and liability issues with AFRDI Standard 151

**AFRDI Standard 151. Rated Load Standard for Fixed Height Chairs. It's an unprepossessing title, but one you should become familiar with, if you're in the business of fitting out public places with seating.**

The obvious question is: why? Fairly simple, really. By definition, if you are providing fixed height seating in a public space, you almost certainly have no control over the type of people who occupy that seating. You could take an 'average' approach, and say that few people would weigh more than 100kg, and you would almost certainly be correct.

But what about the people who, only a short time ago, would have been regarded in statistical terms as outliers, people who may weigh 130kg, even 150kg? Once rare in the community, with the gains in human weight over the past three to four decades, they are now not so uncommon, and to cater for their elevated weight come special responsibilities as a person supplying seating.

In short, you really should make allowances for very heavy people unless, of course, you take the unlikely and possibly controversial action of segregating them from the 'normal' individuals who use your seating.

A few facts to consider. The 'traditional' testing by AFRDI and others on fixed height seating, in libraries, shopping malls, in sporting stadiums and other public places, catered for a person of up to about 100 to 110 kg.

Allowing for the fact that chairs are sometimes abused – two people sitting on a chair together for example, or someone rocking back on a chair's hind legs – most chairs can sustain occasional misuse in this manner without immediate failure.



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(But it may lay the foundation for failure the next time someone else pulls the same stunt).

In a less judgmental sense, consider what happens when a heavy individual sits in a chair for a while and shifts his/her weight around. Such a loading may push an ordinary chair to its design limits.

The AFRDI Rated Load Standard for Fixed Height Chairs tests chairs for people up to 135kg, as well as 160kg and 185kg. For special use, for example as bariatric chairs within an institution, testing can go right out to 300kg.

Chairs which meet even the lowest rung of the Rated Load Standard are by definition superior products, and in a commercial sense, a safer bet when it comes to specifying product which will be used by a broad range of humanity.

To not provide the safest chair possible, a decision which will be tempered by financial considerations of course, invites the possibility of costly litigation should a chair collapse for whatever reason when it's being used.

People frequently injure themselves when a chair breaks, and the expense of a court case will bring the cost of product testing beforehand into its proper perspective – it's extremely low versus the cost of compensation. (Failure of an office chair in Canberra recently attracted compensation of \$1.1 million).

If you want to know more about Rated Load testing by AFRDI (we also do RL testing for office chairs as well) visit our Website at [www.furntech.org.au](http://www.furntech.org.au) or call us on (03) 6326 6155.

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