

Not All Upholstery Warranties Are Equal

As with almost anything in life, the better upholstery is taken care of the longer it will last. With regular cleaning and maintenance it is reasonable to expect it will last beyond the stated warranty period. However, premature upholstery failure is a reality from time to time. Understanding what that means to the person left with a piece of furniture they cannot use can be difficult. This paper is designed to educate you on some key factors related to warranties that you should consider when selecting commercial grade upholstery for your projects. It also highlights how we try to be a partner with you in this at LDI Interiors.



What does an upholstery warranty "guarantee"?

A warranty provides a customer some protection against defects in the manufacture of a product. It also establishes limitations on a supplier's liability when a product wears out or fails. A warranty is simply guaranteeing it was made the way it was intended to be made. A warranty is not a guarantee an upholstery will last for a specific time frame. It isn't a prediction of when you will need to replace it, nor is it a guarantee upholstery that fails before a specific date will be replaced by the supplier.

What is a "defect" in the manufacture of a product?

A defect in the manufacture of a product means a raw material or a process was not correct, resulting in the end product not performing the way it was designed to perform.

How do you prove a manufacturing defect?

Each supplier provides "Typical Physical Properties", sometimes referred to as a specification. If your upholstery has failed, testing on a portion of that material can be done to see if it meets these "Typical Physical Properties".

What are the key limitations on a supplier's liability?

Re-upholstery labor is typically not covered, even if there is a defect in the manufacture of a product. Liability is limited to providing free replacement material.

Most warranty language is designed to clarify examples of why a claim would be invalidated. For instance:

- Normal wear-and-tear is not covered. That means dirt and stains that occur during use are not covered, whether or not they can be successfully removed.
- If a material has not been cleaned according to the suppliers recommended protocol most warranties are invalidated. In a COVID-19 world, in public spaces, especially Healthcare, Sr. Living and Education facilities this a virtual certainty.
- Shift restrictions are common. If your facility is run 24/7 and the warranty is written for a single shift environment, what does that do? Does it shorten the length to 1/3? Worse, does it invalidate the warranty completely? Ask!
- Application of the material to a piece of furniture is not the responsibility of the upholstery supplier. Pattern size, tension during the upholstering process, type of seams, location of seams, type of foam and other variables have a tremendous impact on how an upholstery material will perform. Complaints such as excessive sagging, premature wear at a seam, and damage at a corner that is not protected from a wall are all examples of things that may not be covered.

Best practices when evaluating upholstery options for your project

Presenting a valid warranty claim can be complicated. Look for transparency and talk through “what if’s” and project details with your upholstery supplier.

Talk about the facility the furniture is going into.

- What are the care and maintenance practices?
- Cleaning protocol? Have they, or will they test the specific cleaner on the material to see if it is a big problem?
- Has the facility had problems in the past? If so, what was the problem? Get it out on the table. What was determined to be the cause? Does that information inform the decision you are about to make?

Talk about the specific furniture the specific material is going to be applied to.

- Is there a history of problems that have come up with this specific combination?

Talk about what the upholstery supplier will do in the event of a premature failure.

Virtually every industry standard fabric warranty allows for no charge fabric replacement. However:

- Will they help pay for labor?
- Will the cleaners the facility uses invalidate the claim?
- Will the care and maintenance practices invalidate the claim?
- Will they cover stains and dirty fabric?
- Will they cover sagging upholstery?
- Will they cover wear at the seams?
- Are you covered if a facility operates 24 hours per day?



How does LDI Interiors handle warranties?

LDI understands, in commercial settings it is not practical to follow individual care and maintenance instructions for each of the myriad surfaces that need to be cared for. Our feeling is warranties that don't give a user flexibility with this are worthless. We try to simplify the process in a transparent and easy to understand way.

Our 3-year warranty is not limited to single shift environments. Facilities that run 24 hours a day still get the full 3 years of coverage.

Over 99% of our installations do not result in a warranty claim. If you fall into the less than 1%, this is what you can expect:

- First, let's start with what we won't warranty against (Still ask your LDI Interiors Sales Representative for a discount to help!):
 - Stains, or dirty material. We recommend the material be cleaned regularly and thoroughly to avoid this.
 - Excessive sagging. We have upholstering tips available to set furniture manufacturers up for success. When upholstered with enough tension our materials have good recovery properties and they retain a tightly tailored appearance for a long time. If it is excessively sagging there isn't enough tension being created to keep it taught.
 - Obvious abuse, such as a cut or hole.
- For just about everything else, including seam abrasion:
 - We are going to ask a lot of questions and in many cases come see you. Please know that we are not looking for a loophole. We seek to understand the root cause of the failure. We are looking to learn something to help prevent you and others from having the same experience repeat itself.
 - We are going to retest physical properties on the production retain we kept when we made your material.

Ideally, we would like one of the covers from your furniture back so we can test that as well. This is all intended to find out if the material still meets our specification. If it does not meet our specification we are sending replacement yardage at no cost.

- In cases where the material does meet our specification, we are going to quickly conclude our investigation, rendering an opinion as to what caused the problem and suggesting a path forward to resolve it. This often includes a reasonable amount of replacement yardage at a substantial discount or no cost.
- In some cases, we will help pay for labor. We maintain a robust list of commercial cleaners and disinfectants that are approved for use on our upholstery materials. If we have not approved yours, send it to us and we will test it with the goal of adding it to the approved list. If you experience peeling, cracking or delamination of the material and you are using an approved cleaner we will offset some of the labor costs.