When setting specifications for textile articles and apparel, suppliers need to consider more than just the basic dimensional stability and colour fastness tests normally undertaken.

Aftercare labelling

‘Dryclean only’ labels are sometimes used as a soft option when manufacturers provide aftercare advice for textile items but often this is inappropriate. Manufacturers of textile products should consider the best method of cleaning the whole item, whether it is a garment, a pair of curtains or a set of furniture covers. They should also take into consideration the end use of the item and what type of soiling the consumer is likely to need to remove.

For example, a celebration gown is most likely to become soiled with drink and food staining, which would respond better to washing. A suit worn regularly in a city is probably best drycleaned. Soiling on a set of furniture covers may respond better to washing than drycleaning.

SATRA can help suppliers determine which tests best suit their items and SATRA has developed sets of Guidelines for use by our members which list the most appropriate test methods for each end-use.

Consider the whole item

We consider it vital to assess the entire item when deciding upon aftercare labelling. We have seen several garments, curtains and upholstery items which have failed because the supplier did not carry out testing of all of the components before recommending the method of cleaning.

Trims made from imitation leather, sometimes referred to as ecologic leather or faux leather made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) should not be used on items labelled as suitable for drycleaning because they will harden and can even crack, spoiling the item completely. This is because the plasticiser used to make the PVC soft and flexible can be leached out by the drycleaning solvent. In these instances the basic item without the trim can often be successfully drycleaned or washed, but with the trim in place it will fail.

Preformed bust supports which are built into the structure of a dress, and which cannot be easily removed, must be able to withstand the cleaning process recommended on the care label. There have been several instances where these have failed during cleaning. They have either been unable to withstand the effects of the solvent and have turned to a sticky jelly (often bleeding through the fabric onto the outer), or they have been unable to withstand the heat during the tumble dry process and have shrivelled up. Such problems must be considered during the manufacturing stages.

Curtain headers and tieback supports, interlinings and piping can all cause problems if they are not able to withstand the effects of the cleaning process in the same way as the main fabric. For example, it is important to closely match the dimensional stability of the different textiles used to avoid differential shrinkage during cleaning.

SATRA is exceptional in having UKAS accreditation to carry out all sections of ISO 3175. This comprises four parts as follows:


SATRA’s cleaning technology facility is equipped to carry out wet cleaning of full items such as wedding dresses, furniture covers and other made-up items using a professional wet cleaning machine. Fully trained and qualified drycleaning technologists are able to identify problems and help customers devise practical solutions.

SATRA can also carry out all parts of ISO 6330 stability to washing, as well as a wide range of physical tests to ensure quality of the product during wear and aftercare.

How can SATRA help?

For further information and help in ensuring your high quality textile products are fit for purpose please contact Christine Richardson on 01536 410000 or email christin@SATRA.co.uk