

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CARE LABELLING OF APPAREL AND TEXTILE PRODUCTS.**

For many fabric goods manufacturers and retailers the accurate labelling of the fabric goods that they manufacture and sell is regarded as a bothersome activity mandated by a less than friendly agency.

This is borne out by the instances of incorrect labelling that abound in the marketplace and the responses by the persons responsible when this is drawn to their attention. For the misinformed and for those who believe that the label is "no big thing" they would have to lose an expensive item by subjecting it to an inappropriate cleaning method to understand the gravity of incorrect misleading or non existent labelling. This seems always to be the catalyst to foster an appreciation of how important the fibre content declaration and the care instructions are, and why they should be included on the label.

The maintenance or care procedures to which a fabric is subjected would determine how well the fabric continues to keep its colour, appearance, hand, drape etc. The care procedures followed during usage, cleaning and storage of garments and textile products determine whether the fabrics used in the items maintain their appearance for as long as expected. The chemical structure and composition of the fibres comprising the yarns used for the fabrics determine the cleaning and storage procedures.

A fabric's chemical sensitivity would determine the type of detergent, bleach or dry cleaning treatments to be used when washing or dry cleaning and the heat sensitivity would determine the temperature to be used in washing drying or pressing the fabric. The chemical composition of the fibres in the fabric must be matched with the appropriate care treatment to maintain the garment or textile article in optimum condition.

In addition to chemical composition the manner in which the fibres are spun into yarns and the yarns structured into fabrics will also affect care procedures.

A fabric, which is loosely woven with yarns that are loosely twisted, will not be dimensionally stable, that is it will not keep its shape. Special precautions need to be taken in construction, wear and care of the fabrics so that they maintain their shape and to extend the serviceability of the fabric goods. The construction of the garment or textile product adds to the complexity of the care procedures. For example garments that are colour blocked or have trims of different colours, even though the fabrics are washable may have to be dry cleaned or washed and spin dried immediately to ensure that there is no bleeding of the colours one on another.

Finishes, colour and design features determine how a garment or article is to be treated. With all of the various easy care finishes on the market, a consumer or producer cannot determine how a fabric should be maintained by simply looking at it.

Most finishes are frequently non- visible and fibre content in composite fibre fabrics are usually not all that easy to determine. The consumer has to rely on information given on the garment label or on the information on the fabric label. The producer of garments and textile articles need to indicate accurate fibre content and care instructions on labels so that the consumer may be correctly guided in the care of the items.

In the Caribbean Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, St Lucia, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago have standards requiring all textiles and textile products to be accurately labelled.

The following standards are applicable in the respective countries

Barbados:-----  
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Jamaica: **JS 1 Part 16 1986 the Labelling of Commodities Part 16 the Labelling of Garments** and **JS 29 .1973 Care Labelling of Textiles**

Grenada: **GDBD 1 Part 3 Labelling of all products manufactured from Textiles** and **GDS 1 Part 5 Care Labelling of Garments**

In Trinidad and Tobago there are compulsory standards that regulate the labelling of clothing textiles and textile goods sold in the marketplace.

The compulsory labelling Standard in Trinidad **TTS 76 - Part 3- 1996 Labelling of Garments** makes it a lawful requirement for garments to be accurately labelled to be in compliance. Manufacturers and retailers need to become familiar with these requirements so that they do not risk non-compliance.

Another Standard **TTS 21-10-500 Part 7 1980 Labelling of Textiles** also a mandatory standard spells out the requirements for the labelling of textiles and textile articles. This standard provides for the use of symbols or words to provide the care guidelines. It is expected that by the use of the symbols the ultimate consumer, the launderer, or the dry cleaner will be better able to take care of the garments or textile articles. For this purpose a system of graphical symbols have been established for use in the labelling of the textile articles. The symbols represent five operations, Washing, Bleaching, Drying, Ironing and Dry -cleaning

The standard specifies the use of these symbols and indicates the criteria, which determine the ability of the articles to undergo the appropriate treatments. The following definition applies in the standard.

Bleaching - A process carried out during washing which requires the use of chlorinated or non -chlorinated bleach for the removal of stains and the improvement of whiteness.

Dry-cleaning -A process for cleaning textile articles using organic solvents, the most commonly used dry cleaning solvent is perchloroethylene

Ironing or Pressing - a process carried out on a garment or textile article with the use of an iron to make it smooth or to restore its shape and appearance.

Washing - A process for cleaning textile articles in water with the use of detergents and other laundry aids can be either manual - done by hand or mechanical -done by a machine.

Five symbols are used to represent the cleaning processes:

For the washing process a washtub shape is used with either a number indicating the maximum recommended washing temperature in degrees, or a hand indicating washing by hand in temperature that could be tolerated. For example a washtub symbol with 60° C indicated means machine-wash in water at a maximum of 60° C. A washtub with the illustration of a hand means hand wash only. An "x" through the washtub symbol means **do not wash**.

The triangle represents the bleaching process  
CL within the triangle means chlorine bleach suitably diluted in the wash water is permissible. An "x" in the triangle means **do not use chlorine type bleach**.

A square represents the drying process. A square with a circle drawn inside it means dry in the shade or tumble dry, a semi-circle at the top of the square means line dry. Three vertical lines within the square means to drip dry i.e. hang without wringing or twisting One vertical line means dry flat.

The hand iron represents the ironing process (domestic and commercial) the recommended ironing temperatures are always indicated within the symbol. An "x" through the iron means **do not iron**.

The circle represents the dry cleaning process; the letter enclosed in the circle represents what type of solvent is suitable. An "A" in the circle means **dry -clean in all solvents**, "P" in the circle means **dry-clean in perchloroethylene** an "x" in the circle means **do not dry-clean**.

The colours red orange and green when used as colours for the symbols have meaning as follows;

Red indicates prohibition, that is, the operation represented by the red symbol should not be carried out. An "x" should be superimposed on the red symbol

Orange indicates that some precaution is necessary.

Green indicates that no caution is necessary.

Accurate care labelling is necessary for the consumer to be able to adequately care for the garment or textile article and the mandatory labelling requirements makes it imperative for manufacturers and retailers to ensure that goods manufactured and offered for sale complies with the requirements. The law requires it, and it also makes good business sense, as customers would patronise products that meet quality criteria and offer other tangibles such as good care advice.