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EPA issues final bans on perc, TCE

Last month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced its final bans on trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (PCE), which now gives the textile care industry a ticking deadline for legal using of those solvents. The agency has classified both perc and TCE as “posing an unreasonable risk to human health.”

Both chemicals contaminate air, water and soil and persist in the environment for decades, and both are considered “probable carcinogens.”

On Dec. 9, EPA said it was in the process of submitting the final rules to be published in the Federal Register. Once published, the rule becomes effective in 30 days.

Eight days after the announcement, EPA published its Federal Register Vol. 89, No. 242, on Dec. 17, which in-

cluded the final TCE rule, meaning it will go into effect on Jan. 16, 2025.

so soon in an upcoming edition, making it go into effect sometime early this year.

EPA Rule to Phaseout Perc Timeline

Immediate Restriction: New drycleaning machines bought within six months after the rule’s publication cannot use perc;

3-Year Ban: Perc use in 3rd generation machines become prohibited;

10-Year Phaseout: All perc machines will be banned ten years after rule’s publication. Perc can no longer be used as a spotting agent at this time, as well.



The vast majority of TCE use will be fully prohibited a year from that date, at which point the manufacture of TCE for most consumer and commercial use will halt.

While the final EPA rule on perc was not published in the same issue of the Federal Register, the agency will likely do

Under the new rule, new drycleaning machines purchased six months after the rule’s publication cannot use perc; however, spotting agents with perc will still be permitted for ten years.

In terms of the phaseout, the compliance dates for drycleaning machines will be

dependent on which generation of perc machines are in operation. Those with third generation machines will have three years from the publication of the final rule to stop using perc. Those using fourth and fifth generation machines will have the full ten. At that point, distribution of perc to drycleaners will be prohibited.

“It’s simply unacceptable to continue to allow cancer-causing chemicals to be used for things like glue, drycleaning or stain removers when safer alternatives exist,” said Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention Michael Freedhoff. “These rules are grounded in the best-available science that demonstrates the harmful impacts of PCE and TCE. EPA continues to deliver on actions that protect people, including workers and chil-

dren, under the nation’s premier bipartisan chemical safety law.”

While the textile industry has access to perc for another decade, EPA banned it from nearly all consumer use in less than three years.

According to the Pre-Publication Notice of the Final Rule published by EPA, the agency estimates there are only about 6,000 drycleaners currently using perc machines in the industry. It also notes: “As described further in the Economic Analysis, EPA maintains that almost no new PCE machines have been brought into service in recent years and therefore most existing drycleaning machines using PCE are old enough and will no longer be in service by the phaseout.”

The EPA bans of perc and

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DLI sets 2025 schedule for School of Drycleaning

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) will be offering 10 complete courses throughout the year, including both of its signature Introductory and Advanced Drycleaning courses, which will be offered in March and October.

DLI’s Introduction to Drycleaning course is suited for those who are new to the industry. It meets next from March 24 to 28 and runs from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST at DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technol-

ogy in Laurel, MD.

Some of the topics the one-week course explores include: sorting loads for drycleaning; drycleaning science; fibers and their characteristics; fabric construction; cleaning silk, satin and other fabrics; soil and cleaning theory; operating a drycleaning machine; stain removal chemistry and procedures including removing ink, coffee, grease and other stains from clothing; pressing pants, coats and skirts; using tensioning equip-

ment to improve finishing quality and more.

Tuition is \$2,165 for non-members. DLI members receive discounts ranging from 60% off to free, depending on membership level.

For graduates of the Introductory course, or those with a few years of hands-on production experience, DLI will offer its Advanced course from March 31 to April 11.

Some of the topics that will be emphasized include: designing a cleaning plant with the most effective work flow; pressing laundered shirts; understanding the differences between solvents including perc, GreenEarth and hydrocarbon; getting clean, white laundry; cleaning and preserving wedding gowns; current regulations facing the industry; customer service techniques for cleaners; using bleaches without damaging fabric color and more.

Tuition is \$2,665 for non-members. DLI members receive discounts ranging from 67% off to free, depending on membership level. Students who take both the Introductory and Advanced courses to-

gether can enjoy a reduced tuition rate of \$2,965 per student for non-members, while members can enjoy discounts depending on membership level.

DLI will host both classes later in the year: the Introductory course will run from Oct. 6 to 10; the Advanced course will run from Oct. 13 to 24.

Virtual stain removal

The association has decided to change the format of its Virtual Stain Removal class,

essentially splitting it into two parts: Basic Stain Removal Techniques and Advanced Stain Removal Techniques. Each course is four days long, running online Tuesdays and Thursdays over two-week periods in May, June, and July.

The Basic Stain Removal Techniques will run twice this summer. The first course will meet on May 6, 8, 13 and 15; the second course will take

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DLI’s School of Drycleaning will be back in session this March for another round of classes.



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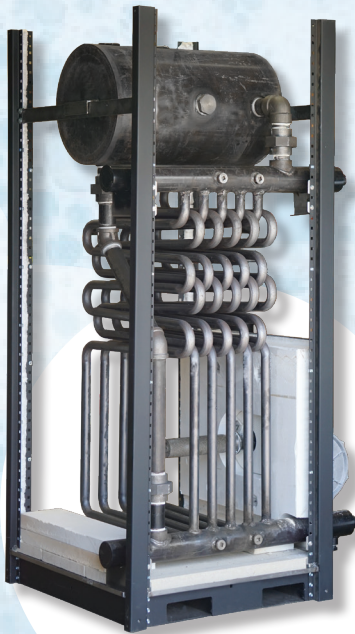
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Textile care and the end of the perc era

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finally moved forward with its *final* bans on perchloroethylene and trichloroethylene (TCE) last month, a move that the drycleaning and laundry industry has known was coming ever since the agency classified both chemicals as “probable carcinogens” many years ago.

Of the two chemicals, TCE’s timeline is much quicker. Most of its uses will be fully prohibited next January. Perc, on the other hand, was given a three-year timeline for nearly all consumer uses, and a ten-year timeline for professional cleaners that will allow them to use 4th and 5th generation machines for the full decade, as well as perc as a stain removal agent. With the deadline beginning a month after EPA publishes the rule in its *Federal Register*, perc stands poised to be gone from the professional cleaning industry by early 2035.

In an age where the pendulum of politics can often swiftly unravel regulations, that may be subject to change. The rule will be vulnerable to the Congressional Review Act (CRA). A Republican-controlled Senate could reverse the measure, for one thing. Or, like he did during his first term, President Trump may seek to reverse or significantly limit many of EPA’s environmental regulations. Although, at this point, such an action might not even make much sense.

After all, according to the EPA’s own numbers and figures, there will only be a little over 60 perc drycleaning machines still in use by the end of the phaseout period. That’s a staggering low number considering that perc has been the leading solvent in the industry since the late 1940s. Of course, it took up a new title in the 1980s and 1990s as it also became the most regulated solvent in the industry.

Unfortunately for the industry, those regulations arrived much too late.

After decades of prolifically using perc without such government guidelines in place, many drycleaners were unjustly liable for much of the astronomical costs required in extremely expensive contaminated site remediation. While perc could handle just about any stain in its time, it has done very little to improve the stained image of the industry.

However, the story did not end there. The drycleaning industry responded in kind even though it had not been treated with kindness. Manufacturers improved technology so perc use was much safer and more efficient while others began to develop new alternative solvents that could clean garments effectively without adding harm to the environment. Meanwhile, the associations and their members worked together to create state cleanup funds for drycleaners with contaminated sites.

None of it happened overnight, of course. The transition away from perc required many years, and it didn’t come easily. So, whether or not the final rule on perc remain in place or is lifted, the industry will continue to move away from it as it continues to seek more sustainable processes in the future.

The textile care industry is in a new era now. Consumers are demanding more than ever from the businesses who service them. They want sustainable processes, more convenience and quicker turnaround times (for more on that last subject, we highly recommend you read John Rothrock’s column this month on page 16).

It is clear that cleaners are ready to move past the perc era and all of its subsequent baggage. While perc may have been the best solvent for aggressively cleaning, the industry has long been moving towards other alternatives that can still properly clean clothes without creating a harmful footprint on the planet we live on.

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Visit us at www.nationalclothesline.com for additional coverage of the drycleaning industry including Online Exclusive columns and articles, visit our issue archives going back all the way to January of 2018.

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Publisher of

NATIONAL CLOTHESLINE

1001 Easton Rd., Suite 107

Willow Grove, PA 19090

Phone: (215) 830-8467

Fax: (215) 830-8490

info@nationalclothesline.com

www.nationalclothesline.com

PUBLISHER

Carol Memberg

EDITOR

Chris Pollay

chris@nationalclothesline.com

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Leslie Schaeffer

Leslie@bpscommunications.com

ADVERTISING

Richard Cappo

rich@nationalclothesline.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Mary Castro-Regan

graphics@bpscommunications.com

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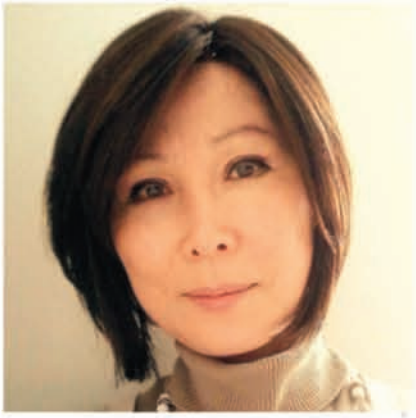


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Out Wickenburg way

About 8,000 residents populate the small town of Wickenburg, AZ, which resides just 50 miles northwest from the Valley of the Sun. Historically, it's known for its dude ranches, guest resorts and gold mines, yet today it is recognized as the "Team Roping Capital of the World."

You might be forgiven for thinking the city would not be optimum for a textile care business, but Ben Root, owner of Western Laundry and Drycleaning, disagrees. Back then, though, it wasn't even on his radar.

"I'm fourth generation from Wickenburg and my kids are fifth, so we've been in town for a long time," he said. "I didn't even know Wickenburg had a drycleaners."

Back then, Ben was focussed on other ambitions, like playing in the NFL one day.

"Then, I realized I wasn't going to when I stopped growing when I was a freshman in high school," he laughed.

Despite that setback, Ben has always been willing to work hard and find a way to achieve the most important goals.

"I proposed to my wife when I was a senior. My wife and I got married two weeks after high school graduation," he recalled. "I went to work for another Wickenburg graduate doing construction down in Phoenix for a year. I worked at the mine in Bagdad in the engineering department for a year."

He also worked for Arizona Public Safety at the Palo Verde nuclear plant, as well. However, in 2012, when he was 24 years old, he veered into a different direction when he was hired as a manager for Western Laundry and Drycleaning by Alex and Heather Lloyd.

"In the time I was managing, we started a few other locations," Ben explained. "The owners were saying, 'Why don't we sell the Wickenburg location and move you up here to Idaho to kind of help restart the commercial business in Idaho?' I said, 'If you're thinking about selling the Wickenburg location, why don't I buy it and you can continue living up in Idaho.'"

The idea was a good one, but it still took some time to figure out how to make it work well for everyone.

"All of 2014, we worked daily to figure it out because I had no money. They weren't able to sell if I had no money," Ben said. "It was a lot of hard work, but it all came together."

"So, finally we sat down with the attorney to draft the closing documents and he said, 'I've never seen a buyer-seller relationship like this

before.' We all laughed because the owners were longtime family friends. She joked that she used to change my diapers. The funny part is... that was actually true because when my dad led a youth group at Calgary Baptist Church, she would babysit me," Ben added. "So, we

we kind of rode that wave here in our state and we've outgrown the space we're in. We're looking at expansion plans again."

During the busy season, the Wickenburg plant can employ close to 50 people, making it one of the biggest employers in the city.



While Ben has a tremendous amount of respect for anyone who enjoys drycleaning and stain removal, that's not really where his passion lies. He's in the business for the opportunity to work with people and watch them grow.

Ben Root

Western Laundry and Drycleaning
Wickenburg, AZ

wanted the deal to be very mutually agreeable and kind of a win-win situation for both of us."

Additionally, Western Laundry and Drycleaning offers its services to cities like Sedona, Scottsdale and

"The most rewarding thing that you can have happen as a business owner is when you spend time investing in a team member and they take all of that and they run with it."

Ben became owner in 2015. He struggled to grow the business during the first few years; then, it exploded.

"We got into kind of a rough spot in 2018, 2019, when we had outgrown our current facility. We we're working around the clock. We did everything we could to maximize that space, but it just came down to the fact that we needed a bigger building," Ben noted. "We ended up bringing on an equity partner at the time specifically to move into this location and get us settled. We're already at the point now where we're getting ready to do a buyout so I'll be sole owner again."

Western Laundry and Drycleaning moved into a 13,000 sq. ft facility in town that had housed a bowling alley for many decades.

After the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, Ben was grateful that he was in a state with a quicker recovery period.

"In 2021, the first year coming off of covid, the economy in Arizona really just exploded," he said. "Arizona was one of the first states to open up and people just flooded in and stayed at the resorts. So, the economy was really booming and

Cave Creek, and it has added other satellite locations in Prescott, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley — which are two hours away.

"They might as well be two days away because the topography is different. The clientele are very different up there," he explained. "In Wickenburg, we're very dominated by jeans and western shirts. We do a lot of horse blankets here, where in Prescott we don't do any. Up there, we get a lot more professional people that dress a bit nicer — it's a bit of a cooler climate up there. It's really interesting to see the two different markets."

One challenge Ben faces as an owner is keeping balance when the seasons shift and the workload dramatically changes.

"We'll lose maybe 65% of our sales, March versus July, so we really go into a full-on hibernation mode in the summertime. We lose a lot of revenue," he said. "We're very heavily seasonal because the snowbirds come and go — people go back to Wyoming, Oregon, Montana — all those places — and they're not really doing any team roping then. That's our next project as far as sales go — stabilizing our sales in the summertime."

"The most rewarding thing that you can have happen as a business owner is when you spend time investing in a team member and they take all of that and they run with it. They expand on what you taught them," he emphasized. "At the same time, you can do that and it might not work out so well. There's nothing more heartbreaking than when that happens."

"That's one area where I am just built that way," he continued. "I love our team. I love team building. That's really what inspires me."

The growth of the leadership team has also been critical to the business's success, which now relies on Ben less and less to be "the owner, the mechanic, the salesperson, the HR representative, the bookkeeper."

"The further we got from that one-man show mentality, the more profitable we became and the more the company grew," he noted. "It's really dependent on our team. We want to invest in people who want to become a leader. So, that trickles down from our leadership team all the way down."

While Western Laundry and Drycleaning's team now handles a wide variety of commercial and retail work, the company specializes in one thing above all — a certain request from pretty much all the cowboys who come stay in the town to participate in team roping season.

"They will bring in a full laundry basket and say, 'I'm headed to rope. How soon can I get these done?' They bring every pair of clothing they own," Ben explained. "They need the jeans really starched. They need it heavy starch. That's what we focus on."

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EPA issues final bans on perc, TCE

Continued from page 1

TCE could still face an uncertain future of political risks ahead if the Republican-controlled Senate overturn it utilizing the Congressional Review Act (CRA). Regardless, if the EPA numbers approach anything near accuracy, then the industry seems to be transitioning away from perc at a significant rate. In fact, EPA also estimates there should only be about 60 perc machines still in use in ten years.

So, it seems perc will be facing extinction in a decade, which, as it turns out, will be almost 100 years after it was first introduced in the textile care industry. Trichloroethylene (TCE) was first introduced as a drycleaning solvent in 1930, though it would soon take a back seat to perc, first in-

troduced in 1934.

As chlorinated cleaning solvents rose in popularity, the annual U.S. drycleaning use in 1940 was estimated to be approximately 45 million pounds of carbon tetrachloride, about 12 million pounds of perc and five million pounds of TCE.

Eight years later, perc supplanted carbon tetrachloride as the leading chlorinated solvent in drycleaning — enjoyed for its ability to work wonders as a powerful solvent, able to dissolve grease, oil and waxes without damaging fabrics.

In 1950, a study by the National Institute of Cleaning & Dyeing determined the U.S. drycleaning industry utilized 67,500,000 pounds of perc.

Use of the solvent peaked about 1980, but it had also began to catch the attention of

lawmakers who began to see a need to regulate to make sure perc was handled, transported, utilized and disposed of safely.

By the end of that decade, perc was suspected to be a toxic air pollutant by EPA, and it was identified as adverse to human health when found as a compound in drinking water.

The 1990s saw more perc-related regulations for the textile care industry and significant technological advancements that reduced perc use in drycleaning such as the first use of a closed loop solvent delivery system in 1993, which recirculated the solvent instead of releasing it in the air.

The 1990s also saw the creation of perc drycleaning cleanup programs in states like Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, South Carolina, Illinois, North

Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin to handle costly remediation projects at former and current drycleaning sites.

By 1998, the Halogenated Solvents Industry Alliance (HSIA) had estimated that the drycleaning industry was responsible for only 36% of the perc use in the U.S. Still, it was clear perc's reign, though long, would eventually end as alternative solvents began to populate the marketplace.

Eight years later, the California Air Resources Board voted to phase out perc drycleaning by Jan. 1, 2023, which, of course, has already happened. In New York, cleaners can no longer use perc in shared residential buildings as of Dec. of 2020, and currently only 4th and 5th generation machines can be used there.

Oregon also has a law in the books that will prohibit use of perc in drycleaning in the state starting on Jan. 1, 2028. The law was signed by Gov. Kotek in July of 2023.

Illinois also has a law that will transition cleaners away from perc starting on Jan. 1, 2026, and ending Jan. 1, 2030.

For those following the federal perc ban, EPA will host a free webinar called "Final Regulation of Perchloroethylene under TSCA" at 12:30 p.m. EST on Wednesday, Jan. 15.

To register for the event, go to epa.gov and visit the "Assessing and Managing Chemicals Under TSCA" section where you can find access to EPA's "Risk Management for Perc" page. To view the current issue of the Federal Register, visit www.federalregister.gov.

DLI sets 2025 schedule for School of Drycleaning

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place on July 8, 10, 15 and 17. The course will also be taught in Spanish later this year on Nov. 11, 13, 18 and 20 by Gina Hernandez of Ortega Cleaners, a DLI member in San Juan Capistrano, CA.

"Members asked for a Spanish version of our Stain Removal course," said Brian Johnson, DLI's Director of Education and Analysis. "We are

pleased to work with Gina Hernandez, a DLI member in California to offer this course."

The Advanced Stain Removal Techniques virtual course will take place only in June. Course dates will be June 10, 13, 17 and 19.

DLI plans to host new virtual courses this year, as well, partnering with Jen Whitmarsh of Snappy Drycleaning and The Route Pros. She will present a

course for customer service representatives (CSRs) on "Service Superstars" that will meet on two dates: July 29 and 31.

This class is designed to transform customer service professionals into brand ambassadors. It focuses on building the skills and mindset needed to create unforgettable customer experiences, foster loyalty, and drive success.

Later in the year, Whit-

marsh will present "Inspire and Influence: Leadership" on Sept. 9 and 11. The course will empower individuals to become impactful leaders in today's fast-paced world. This program focuses on mastering the art of inspiration, building trust, creating a dynamic culture, and fostering individual leadership to drive success in any team. Through interactive sessions, real-world scenarios, and actionable strategies, participants will learn how to effectively communicate a company's overall vision, motivate others, and create a lasting positive impact.

Whitmarsh and DLI designed this course to equip emerging leaders and seasoned professionals with the tools to lead with confidence, authenticity, and purpose.

Rounding out the educational highlights of the year from DLI will be a special Midwest Basic Stain Removal Techniques hybrid course, based on its successful West Coast Stain Removal courses of the past two years. This year, DLI will offer a special hybrid edition that covers three days of virtual learning and one day of on-site training at Sankosha's Elk Grove facility in the Chicago area.

The dates when the course will be on Zoom include Feb. 20, 25 and 27. The on-site date for the class will be on March 5.

For more information or to register for any of DLI's courses, contact DLI at (800) 638-2627 or visit the association's website located at www.DLIonline.org.

Clean 2025 begins attendee registration

Registration opens on Jan. 29 for anyone seeking to attend this year's Clean Show, slated to take place from Aug. 23 to 26 in Orlando, FL.

The event will be hosted at the Orlando Convention Center by Show Organizer Messe Frankfurt with the help of several sponsoring associations: the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute; the Textile Care Allied Trades Association; the Coin Laundry Association; the Association for Linen Management; and the Association for the Linen, Uniform and Facility Services.

The event will be a showcase for all the latest technological innovations and live working equipment on the exhibit floor.

Messe Frankfurt anticipate over 400 exhibitors taking up at least 200,000 sq. ft. of space this summer.

The cost to attend the event will be \$125 per member of any of the sponsoring associations or \$155 per non-member for those who register before July 19. After that date, the cost goes up to \$175 for both members and non-members. Visit the official site at www.clean-show.com.



“Our recent MfM collaborative gathering served as a platform for sharing knowledge, discussing emerging trends, and brainstorming innovative solutions to common challenges faced by our industry. As CEO of Best Care Dry Cleaners, I am proud to have participated in this exchange of ideas. By staying informed of the latest advancements in garment care technology, we can ensure that our services are efficient, convenient, and tailored to meet the evolving needs of our clients.”

~Lisa Loscerbo, Best Care Dry Cleaners, Winnipeg

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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

Should employers ban workplace dating?

The federal law prohibiting sexual harassment originated not from Congress but from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Through its regulations, the EEOC classified sexual harassment — such as certain vulgar language — as a form of “sex discrimination” under the Civil Rights Act.

Initially, this concept did not extend to harassment between individuals of the same sex or to “equal opportunity” harassers who targeted both men and women indiscriminately.

Over time, the definition of sexual harassment has broadened significantly. Same-sex harassment is now recognized, and courts devote far more attention to workplace language than they did 50 years ago.

Harassment based on other protected categories — such as race, religion, national origin and disability — has also been deemed illegal under the Civil Rights Act. Today, even remarks the speaker considers hu-

morous can fall under scrutiny in the workplace. It’s doubtful the EEOC anticipated this level of expansion.

This article, however, is not about harassment per se. It’s about a related and equally complex topic: office romance. The intertwining of workplace relationships and sexual harassment laws can create significant challenges for employers. When office romances go awry, they often become the employer’s problem, making it essential for companies to address this issue — even if they don’t have formal policies on the subject.

Companies take varying approaches to office romances. Some ban dating outright, while others require employees to disclose relationships or prohibit supervisory relationships between romantically involved employees.

Most businesses, however, manage office romances on a case-by-case basis, intervening only when the relationship af-

fects workplace operations.

The most challenging moments for employers

bitter divorce. In such cases, one party may claim the relationship wasn’t

duct. While these contracts may work for larger organizations, they can appear overly formal and even counterproductive in court.

For smaller companies, a better approach may be to discuss the relationship with the parties involved and document the conversation in their personnel files. This strikes a balance between formal documentation and a lighter touch.

Employee training is another crucial element. Many states require harassment training, but even where it isn’t mandatory, educating employees about the potential challenges of office romances can help prevent issues. Ensure the training is engaging and informative — poor training can do more harm than good.

Adulterous relationships pose unique challenges, often involving multiple parties and creating particularly volatile situations. Employers may need to take swift, decisive action in such cases to protect workplace harmony.

Despite the challenges, it is worth acknowledging the positive aspects of workplace relationships. Many successful marriages began in the office, and some couples have even gone on to build businesses together. Others manage to work professionally after divorce. Compared to the risks of online dating, office romances can feel safer for many people.

Given the inevitability of workplace relationships, the focus should be on managing them thoughtfully and with common sense. Avoid overly rigid measures like love contracts unless absolutely necessary, and instead, create an environment where such relationships can be monitored and managed constructively.

Frank Kollman is a partner in the law firm of Kollman & Saucier, PA, in Baltimore, MD. He can be reached by phone at (410) 727-4300 or fax (410) 727-4391. His firm’s web site can be found at www.kollmanlaw.com. It has articles, sample policies, news and other information on employee/employer relations.

Some companies require employees involved in a romance to sign love contracts which outline terms related to consent and workplace conduct.

often occur at the beginning and end of a workplace romance. At the outset, a supervisor’s request for a date can raise questions of whether the request is “unwelcome” under sexual harassment law.

Repeated advances after a refusal clearly constitute harassment, but even a single request could become problematic if the recipient feels pressured or if the dynamics of the office relationship change following rejection.

When a relationship ends, workplace tensions can escalate, sometimes resembling the aftermath of a

truly consensual. For instance, an employee might argue they felt compelled to acquiesce to a superior’s advances to protect their job.

While a robust sexual harassment policy with clear reporting procedures can help, it is less effective when the alleged harasser is a senior executive or owner of the company.

Should employers ban workplace dating?

In theory, banning workplace dating might seem like a straightforward solution. In practice, such policies are nearly impossible to enforce. Employees who wish to date will often do so secretly, undermining the policy’s effectiveness.

Moreover, enforcing such a rule uniformly can be problematic — what happens if your two top performers are found to be dating? Do you terminate them? Ignore the violation?

Either choice complicates future enforcement efforts. Like drug-testing policies, anti-dating rules should only be adopted if the employer is prepared to handle their consequences consistently.

A balanced approach

A more practical strategy involves addressing office romances within the company’s sexual harassment policy and managing relationships on a case-by-case basis. Policies should make it clear that workplace relationships will be closely monitored to ensure they are consensual and remain professional. If a supervisory relationship exists, consider altering the chain of command to mitigate conflicts of interest.

Some companies require employees involved in a romance to sign *love contracts* outlining terms related to consent and workplace con-

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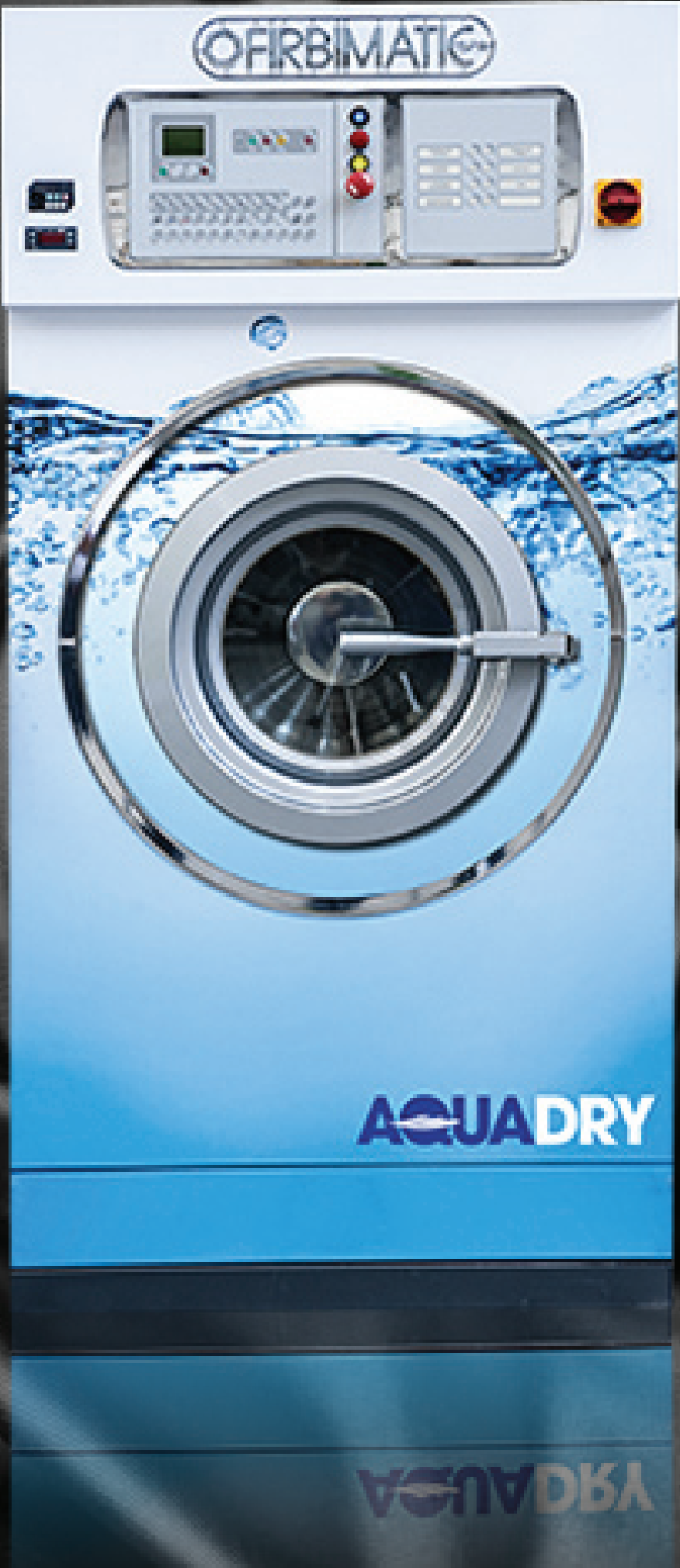
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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Solvent flow — what it's all about part 2

This month, I'll continue on solvent flow by discussing the heart of the solvent flow system, the solvent pump. (Part one can be found in the December 2024 issue online at www.nationalclothesline.com.)

The solvent pump on most drycleaning machines is a centrifugal-type pump. It is a mechanical device designed to move solvent by a motor rotating a disk-like device called an impeller with vanes on its surface.

Fluid enters the rapidly rotating impeller at its center and is cast out by centrifugal force along its circumference through the impeller's vane tips.

Pump fouling problems

There is no end to the list of junk that solvent washes through the drycleaning machine: buttons, lint, pens, pencils, credit cards, collar stays, pins, coins, and the list goes on and on. Hopefully, the button trap strainer will catch most of these objects.

Nothing is 100%, and some debris will get through, and when it does,

in most cases, the pump's impeller will chop it up and pass it through to eventually be trapped in the filter or still. However, when the pump can't chew it up and spit it out, the debris often slowly accumulates in the area between the vanes on the pump's impeller. This accumulation is a cascading process. Once begun, it will rapidly degrade the pump's performance.

The following are the most common symptoms when debris is fouling the solvent pump's impeller, and they fall into two basic categories: **electrical** and **drycleaning quality**.

Electrical

Case #1. When an object locks up the impeller, preventing it from rotating, the pump motor's excess current draw almost immediately leads to overload tripping. This causes the machine to shut down and display an error message on most drycleaning machines.

Case #2. When there is a significant debris build-up in the impeller vanes which *drags* on the motor. After a

CHECKING PUMP PERFORMANCE

SETTING UP SOLVENT FLOW PATH

FROM TANK 1 TO WHEEL

TANK SIGHT GLASS

LAZY NARROW SPRAY PATTERN

FULL POWERFUL SPRAY PATTERN

HERE'S WHAT THE PUMP INTERNALS LOOK LIKE

PUMP IMPELLER AND RACEWAY CLOGGED WITH DEBRIS

IMPELLER VANES COMPLETELY CLOGGED WITH LINT AND DEBRIS

IMPELLER VANES CLEARED OF LINT AND DEBRIS

few minutes of operation, the motor overload will trip, causing the machine to shut down and display an error message.

Case #3. When debris builds up in the impeller vanes, a reduced flow rate

during the drain period results in the solvent level not dropping below the cleaning machine basket. Then, when the extract motor turns on, it attempts to spin the basket through the solvent — the extra drag causing the extract motor overload to trip. This debris build-up in the impeller may be in only one or two impeller vanes, leading to intermittent tripping of the extract motor overload.

Cleaning quality

When debris clogs the impeller, there is a marked decrease in the volume of solvent being moved by the pump. Symptoms of this reduced flow rate can result in these undesirable effects.

Greying (redeposition). With less solvent flushing through the garments in a given time, particulates that would usually be suspended in the solvent and then carried to the filter or still settle back out of suspension onto the garments, resulting in greying. Also, suppose the basket attempts to rotate through the solvent remaining in the wheel. In that case, it agitates the solvent, splashing against the tub's sides, washing old accumulated debris onto the garments.

Poor filtration. Another symptom of pump problems is poor filtration. Flow rate through the filters is paramount to good cleaning quality. The solvent pump must overcome the

filters' resistance to the solvent flow. This resistance is called filter pressure. When the vanes of the solvent pump become fouled, there is a marked reduction in the pump's ability to force solvent through the filter, thus reducing that vital flow rate with the attendant effects outlined in the preceding paragraph on greying.

Checking pump performance

A method I've always found handy to check pump performance is to set up the flow path so solvent is pumped from a tank back to the same tank while watching the spray pattern across the tank sight glass. The area the spray fans out over the sight glass is a good barometer of the solvent pump performance. The accompanying illustrations above show the valve setup for the spray pattern check and the pump's internals.

Bruce Grossman is the Chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing. EZtimers manufactures machines that make your machines run better. For those needing to replace Zero-Waste or Galaxy misters, see our SAHARA 2 model. For those with boiler problems, check out our EZ-Level and EZ-Dose machines. For more information on EZtimers products, visit www.eztimers.com. Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

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TURNAROUND TIME



BY JOHN ROTHROCK

A new era and a new norm: same-day service

As the drycleaning industry enters 2025, it stands on the cusp of transformation. With an ambitious national marketing campaign on the horizon — an industry-wide effort akin to the legendary “Got Milk?” campaign — there’s a real opportunity to reignite consumer interest in professional garment care. But, for this campaign to succeed, and for our industry to grow, we must ask ourselves one fundamental question: *Are we ready to meet the expectations this campaign will create?*

Consumer habits have shifted and convenience reigns supreme. Same-day service isn’t just an operational upgrade; it’s the key to winning back market share and positioning cleaners as indispensable in today’s fast-paced world. Drycleaning has long been about reliability and quality, but the rules have changed. Today, customers demand both speed and convenience, as evidenced by the 2023 Cleaners Supply survey: *66% of consumers said they’d bring in more clothes if turnaround times were faster, and 50% want their clothes back within a day.*

Despite this, over half of cleaners still promise turnaround times of two or more days, leaving them

out of sync with consumer expectations. What happens when a potential customer needs a garment cleaned for tomorrow, but balks at a three-day wait? They find an alternative — whether it’s wearing wrinkled clothing, athleisure, or skipping professional cleaning altogether. This disconnect is a threat to piece counts and profitability. For those willing to embrace same-day service, it’s an opportunity.

Plus, the timing couldn’t be better to make same-day service your standard. With the upcoming marketing campaign set to elevate public awareness, drycleaners offering same-day service will be uniquely positioned to capitalize.

This campaign will remind customers of the value of professional cleaning, but it’s up to us to deliver a service that meets their modern expectations.

If our industry is going to thrive, same-day service must become the norm. That means rethinking how we operate and adopting a fresh perspective on speed, focus, and efficiency.

Offering Same-Day Service

Implementing same-day service isn’t about rushing or cutting corners; it’s about working smarter. Here’s how forward-thinking operators can make it happen:

1. Redefine Your Work-

flow. Many plants struggle with inefficiencies that create delays. Clothes zigzag across buildings, exceptions pile up, and team members waste time managing activities rather than systems. By streamlining your workflow into a logical, circular flow — where orders move seamlessly from the counter to cleaning and finishing to inspection — you eliminate bottlenecks and confusion.

This isn’t just theory. Plants that have simplified their workflows report reduced labor costs and higher productivity. Efficiency isn’t just about speed; it’s about making every step of the process easier for your team and better for your customers.

2. Focus on Core Services. Drycleaning businesses often overextend themselves, offering everything from alterations to drapery cleaning. While these services may seem like ways to diversify, they often complicate operations and dilute your ability to deliver fast, consistent results. Instead, consider narrowing your focus.

At Yale Cleaners, we’ve seen success by concentrating on everyday wear, garments like pants, suits, dresses, and blouses. Eliminating low-demand services freed up resources, allowing us to perfect our

core offerings and improve turnaround times.

3. Train Your Team for Consistency. Same-day service demands a well-trained team that knows the systems inside and out. Clear expectations, standardized workflows, and ongoing training are essential for maintaining quality while increasing speed.

Empower your employees with the tools and knowledge they need to succeed, and you’ll see the difference in both performance and morale.

Offering same-day service isn’t just good for customers; it’s a smart business move. Consider the benefits:

- **Increased Piece Counts.** Faster turnaround removes a major barrier for customers, encouraging them to bring in more garments.

- **Operational Simplicity.** Eliminating multiple speeds of service reduces complexity, making it easier to manage workloads and avoid costly mistakes.

- **Stronger Customer Loyalty.** Consistent same-day service sends a clear message: you value your customers’ time. That trust builds repeat business.

- **Competitive Advantage.** As the industry shifts, same-day cleaners will set themselves apart, especially as the national campaign

boosts consumer awareness.

What’s Holding Us Back?

Despite the clear advantages, many operators hesitate to embrace same-day service, citing concerns about cost, quality, or logistics. Let’s be honest — these are solvable problems. With the right systems and a commitment to change, any operation can adapt.

The real barrier is mindset. Too many businesses view same-day service as an exception rather than the standard. But, as the upcoming marketing campaign generates new interest in drycleaning, the businesses that offer speed and reliability will be the ones that win.

As we begin 2025, let’s resolve to meet this moment head-on. The upcoming marketing campaign will remind customers why they need us — but it’s up to each of us to deliver a service they can depend on.

If you haven’t already, use this year to evaluate your systems, refine your workflows, and streamline your offerings. Same-day service isn’t just a trend; it’s the foundation for the next era of drycleaning.

Here’s my challenge to you:

- Commit to same-day service as your standard.
- Focus on your most profitable services.

- Train your team to embrace efficiency and quality.

Together, we can create a brighter future for our industry — one that’s customer-focused, efficient, and ready for growth. Let’s stop waiting and start leading.

John Rothrock, a University of Oklahoma alumnus and Certified Garment Care Professional (CGCP), leads Yale Cleaners in Tulsa, Oklahoma. John is passionate about exceeding customer expectations and innovation in the drycleaning industry. His expertise extends beyond garment care, with a viral video educating viewers on the drycleaning process. Currently, he leverages his industry knowledge by serving as the second vice president of the Southwest Drycleaning Association (SDA).



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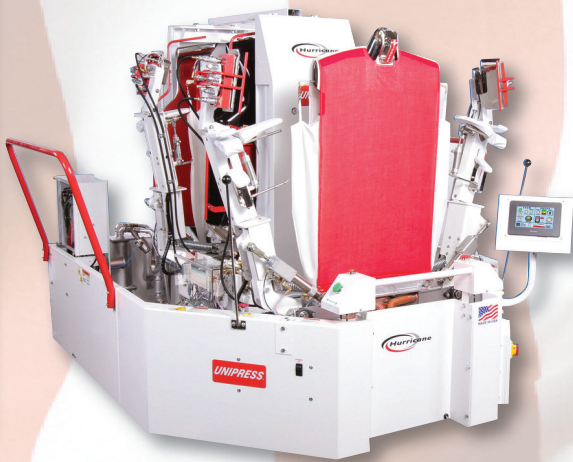
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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

A new kind of Holiday Wishlist — Part 2

Over the 46 years that I have worked, managed, consulted and directed for this industry, I have picked up quite a few tidbits of wisdom, gold nuggets of “I wish I knew that 10 years ago!” and a few things that will make you say, “Well, I’ll be a son-of-a-gun.” Luckily, I have a great memory, so I haven’t forgotten these treasures yet. For the first part of this column, see the December 2024 issue (www.nationalclothesline.com). This month, I still have more to share.

● Why doesn’t the vacuum on your shirt buck work as well as it should? The answer is pretty easy, but you won’t like it. Also, your equipment must be well-maintained. You can’t have a split in your vacuum hose and expect good suction. Similarly, you can’t have flannel that is so compacted that it is no longer porous.

There is a device that can measure the suction of a

vacuum. I’ve never owned one, although I considered

from somewhere. The exhaust fan will draw air —

any fans are turned on.

● I’m very much an em-

There is a device that can measure the suction of a vacuum. I’ve never owned one, although I considered getting one years ago. I didn’t because I never once measured a shirt unit vacuum to be below the target range. Not even once.

getting one years ago. I didn’t because I have never once measured a shirt unit vacuum to be below the target range. *Not even once.* Yet most cleaners would probably claim that the vacuum on their machine *sucks*, meaning it doesn’t suck. Why? How many times have you gone into a restaurant and found the front door difficult to pull open? If you’ve never noticed, you will starting today now that I have mentioned it. This happens because the exhaust fans in the kitchen are on (as they must be), sucking fresh air

no matter what — from somewhere.

Why doesn’t the vacuum on your shirt buck work as well as it should? Because you have an exhaust fan in your plant that vigorously fights the relatively small vacuum motor, which is no match for the 36” (or larger) exhaust fan that moves between 6,200 to 13,000 cubic feet per minute. The fan will draw air through the vacuum buck, fighting the puny vacuum motor. If you want to test my *theory*, notice how well the shirts stick with the vacuum first thing in the morning before

employee’s manager. I recognize that no manager can accomplish anything unless he/she has the support of quality staff members. I also have been known to give raises before someone asks for one. Or, let’s say that I’ve done it in the past. I’m probably not going to do it in the future.

My philosophy had been in line with that of the One-Minute Manager... catch someone in the act of doing something right. I definitely subscribe to that philosophy full force and have for decades, but I took it too far, at least once.

The big laundry I wrote about last month was really growing, but we were not quite at the point where we needed two shifts. We worked 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, until 7 p.m. on Wednesday, and just regular eight-hour days on Thursday and Friday.

There was one particular employee who worked every single hour we were open, was never late and never missed a day. He had five kids with four different women and his wages were garnished to the hilt. He took home \$70. On a whim, I called him into my office and told him that he was the hardest worker I had ever met and I was giving him a \$1 per hour raise, effective immediately. Who’s dumber than me?

He immediately started taking Thursday off and I soon fired him for absenteeism based on the attendance policy. I should have left it alone.

● You’re gonna hate this one, but it’s true. It’s hard enough to get the starch on shirts, correct? Few customers understand that only natural fibers absorb starch. Try as you might, that polyester disco shirt

will be as limp as al dente tagliatelle, no matter how much starch you use. I believe some customers specifically ask for heavy starch because they want that limp noodle to be as full of body as their Robert Graham. Worse still, they may think you’re incompetent because you still didn’t give them heavy starch!

I was talking with a customer today who brought in 17 shirts. He asked for heavy starch. I decided to explain things to him. About a dozen were dark colors and 100% polyester. Four or five were actually *starchable*. Starchable is a word that I invented. Conveniently, every single person that reads this sentence knows the definition of this word, which is why if you look up the word in the dictionary, you won’t find it.

I told him that I’ll ring his order as heavy starch and I showed him which ones (the four or five cotton shirts) would feel stiff. But, we know all this. We all do. Yet, there are times when the shirts at your plant feel starched and at other times... not so much.

How can that be when you always put the same amount of product in the starch cycle? You probably think that it’s the number of shirts in the wheel. It isn’t usually. And I say usually for a reason. You might need more starch than you’re using. I have seen some use laughably little in a 50 to 60-lb wheel. Like two ounces. A ballpark amount might be around eight ounces, but it could easily be double that.

I can’t calculate that from here and that’s not what I’m trying to do. I’m trying to explain why your starch level is different from day to day. If you are using far too little product and then you double the number of shirts, use the same amount of product and that is still far too little. You can see that the number of shirts in the wheel may not affect the starch quality in the least.

I had to starch four shirts the other day. I threw them loosely in the empty drum of a 60-lb washer to run a

Continued on page 22

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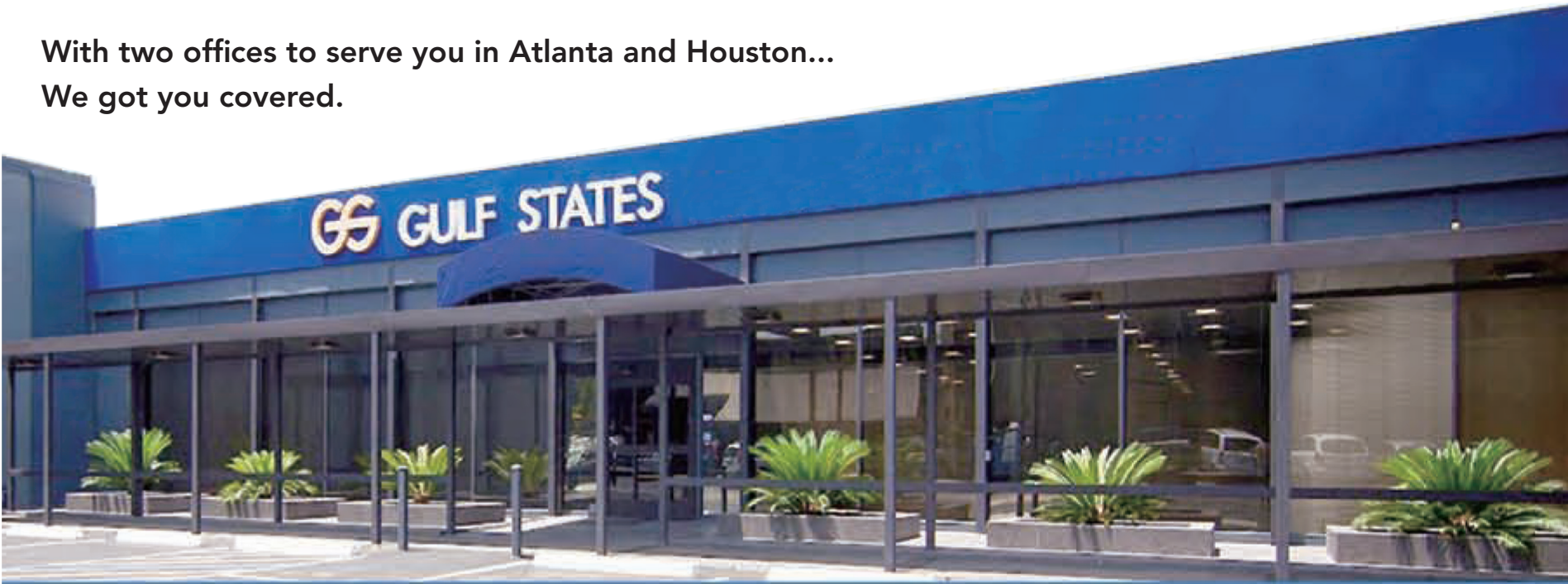
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Don Desrosiers

A new kind of Holiday Wishlist — Part 2

Continued from page 20

Starch Only cycle (100 degrees, low level). Knowing this column had been brewing in my brain and would soon cascade down my arms, out my fingers and through the keyboard, I grinned. I was certain that 99 out of 100 people in this industry are thinking the opposite of what I was thinking.

It was only four shirts. I only need to add a little bit of starch. Admit it. You would add less starch for these four shirts than if it was a full load of shirts. That machine likely uses 150 gallons of water (here's a free tip: 70% or 105 gallons of that is hot water). That's probably five cycles.

A wash cycle at high level consumes 25 gallons. Low level is about 15 gallons. Let's say that I regularly use eight ounces of premium starch (another free tip: always throw the starch powder directly on the shirts. Close the door and start the cycle).

When I looked at that washer drum with four shirts in it, I thought, "I think that I'd have to add two pounds of starch to get

those shirts to stiffen!"

All the while, everyone else is thinking; "Maybe two teaspoons?" The reason is that you starch the water, not the shirts. The more concentrated the starch to water mix, the better your starch quality will be. I get it. Nobody is going to add two pounds of starch to four shirts. I did the same thing that you would do. Add some starch and hope you don't annoy the customer. If they're returned, claim "honest mistake."

If I added eight ounces to 15 gallons of water, the water would be just barely cloudy. Now, picture the same wash wheel, full of shirts to starch. The water level in a washer isn't metered. The volume, say 15 gallons, is variable, based on the water line on the glass. If the wheel is full of fabric, much less water will be introduced. Now, the eight ounces of starch produce a liquid that looks like skim milk. The result will be well-starched shirts.

So, it does depend on the number of shirts in the wheel but it is inversely proportional — that is,

fewer shirts equals more starch, more shirts equals less starch.

There is a similarity with detergent and water level. If you have a single piece to wash, and wash it in a typical drum at the usual water level, it will have a very dilute solution of detergent and may not do the job.

I said that you were going to hate this one. Let me correct that. Half of you are loving this tip and the other half are hating it.

● In order to press something, you need steam, followed by drying in place to remove all the moisture. If you don't remove all the moisture, the fabric will wrinkle, now or later.

Sometimes, if wrinkles occur, one may add more steam. This happens often with automatic toppers or steam forms. Adding more steam makes the problem worse. Remember: 3-1. Use a three to one ratio of dry time to steam time.

This holds true for all equipment and can be damaging to the equipment if you don't do it. If you set your steam form to steam for five seconds, set the

blower for 15 seconds. If your pants topper steams for four seconds, blow-dry them for 12.

Did I say damage? I often see the steam/blower woefully out of whack. I can tell when a suzy or a topper is (or was) just by looking at it. *Rust*.

The steam is never blown out of the equipment. Droplets of steam, turn to puddles of water and slowly rust up the cabinet. Just enough steam to dampen the cloth, then blow dry. Ta da!

● While we're talking about steam and vacuum, I just reminded you of how important drying the fabric is. That's certainly just as important on a press. Many have built-in vacuums now, but a great many plants have central vacuum.

There can be all sorts of leakage within either of these systems. Knowing how important vac is, how can you test to see if your vacuum is adequate? It's easy. Depress the bottom steam and the vacuum pedal at the same time. There should be no steam escaping through the buck. If there is, this is a high-priority repair. Depending on the severity, this press may be unusable.

● Last month, I told you I'd expand on the four things that you need to wash shirts: **Time, temperature, chemical action, mechanical action**. These are listed in order of confusingness. Yes, that word does make sense. It's been said that you can play loosey-goosey with these components — more of one and less of the other — and get the same results and then back again, but which ones? And by how much?

Time. Really? We can't be taking two hours to wash shirts no matter how big the washer is.

Temperature. We talked about this at length last month. Check it out online at www.nationalclothesline.com.

Chemical Action. I suggest you leave this to your supplies rep. The best thing about being in the laundry business is that you can make poor wash quality someone else's fault, but do your part! Make sure your equipment is working correctly and that your water temperature is correct.

Mechanical Action. The confuse-ability quotient has been maxed. As long as the

washer is tumbling, that's a ton of mechanical action, right? We need it. We have it. What else you need? The tumbling washer is, indeed, mechanical action, but not necessarily good action.

If shirts were uniformly dirty, washing loosely might make sense. I'm not sure. I've never seen shirts uniformly dirty, but I know that bed linen is and that is washed loosely. Shirts must be rope-tied in order to get clean. You cannot get shirts clean if you wash them loosely. (Sorry, Charlie.)

Oh! I see you in the back row! *Your shirts are always clean, and you always wash loosely. But, you scrub collars and add a dirty collar additive to the wash.* What you're doing is making up for inadequate mechanical action and adding chemical action.

And, if you do the math, you will see that your chemical cost is twice what it would be without those additives!

Oh, excuse me. You said that you do not scrub or spray collars and the shirts are coming clean while being washed loose? Well, in that case, we will reduce your chemicals and chemical cost, and add mechanical action with RopeTies.

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Hey, this was fun. If you have any specific questions, drop me a line at tailwind.don@me.com. I'll group a bunch of good questions (if I have the answers) in an upcoming column. See you next month!

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Don Desrosiers has been in the drycleaning and shirt laundering business since 1978. He is a work-flow engineer and a management consultant who provides services to shirt launderers and drycleaners through Tailwind Systems. He is a member of the Society of Professional Consultants and winner of DLI's Commitment to Professionalism award. He can be reached by cell phone (508) 965-3163, or email to: tailwind.don@me.com.

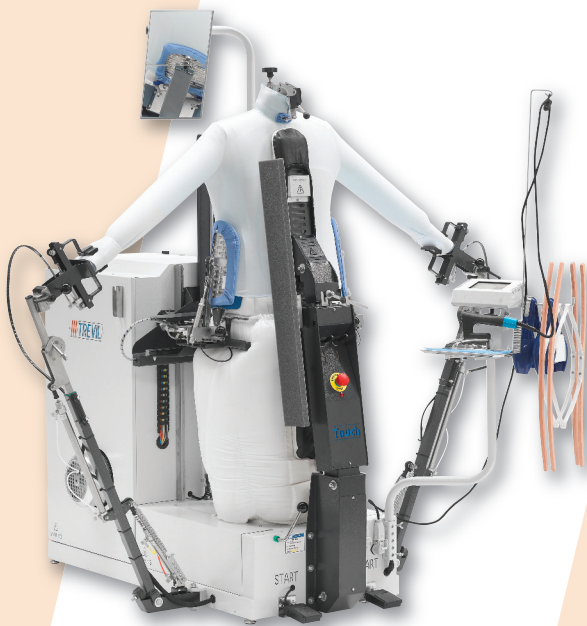


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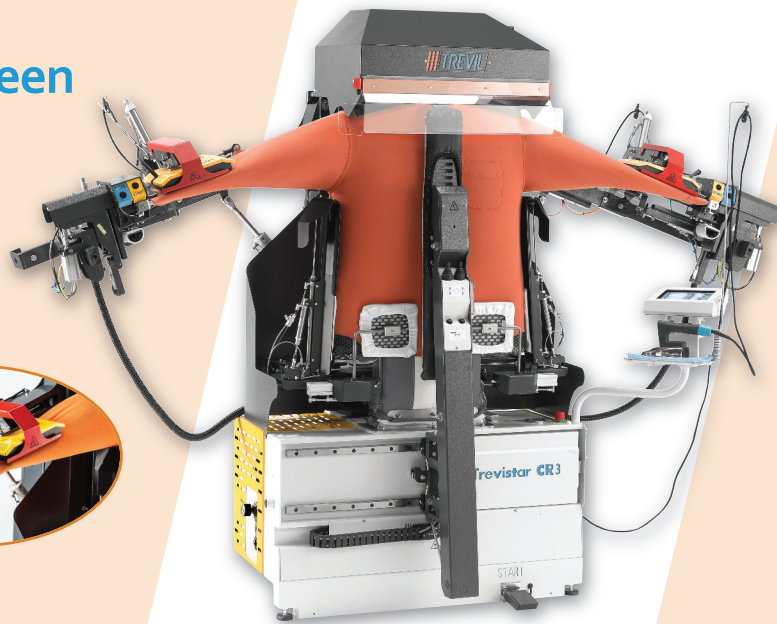
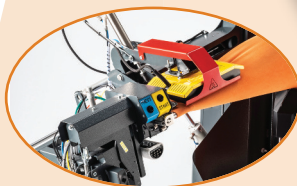
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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Spotting techniques for delicate fabrics

A delicate fabric is described as a fabric that is capable of weakening and discoloring from mechanical action and the chemicals used for spotting. Precautions should be taken depending on the weaknesses of the particular fabric in question.

Silk. Problems with silk range from weak yarns and colors that are sensitive to certain chemicals.

Mechanical action. Silks should be spotted with a padded silk brush or a bristled brush wrapped with a towel or cheesecloth. The safest mechanical action is tamping rather than brushing. When tamping, make sure the fabric is flat. If brushing is attempted with a bristle brush, use the side of the bristles rather than the flat brush.

Protein stains. Silk is sensitive to alkali, ammonia and protein formulas which contain alkali. The safest chemical for protein stain removal is a powdered digester. This avoids the need

for mechanical action and is as safe as water. Liquid digesters are relatively safe, but not as safe as powdered digesters.

Tannin stains. Tannin formulas and mild acids are relatively safe to silk. Stronger acids such as oxalic should be tested first. General formula, which contains alcohol, should never be used.

Dryside stains. Avoid strong paint remover. The darker the color of the paint remover, the stronger it is. Do not use water with any paint removers since it causes alcohol to be released causing a discoloration.

Dryclean garments immediately after spotting with paint remover to avoid moisture in the air, which activates the alcohol in the paint remover. Amyl acetate is safe to all silk except those with a paint thinner.

Wool. Most wools are sturdy but have similar chemical sensitivity. Wools can withstand more mechanical action than silk. It also has a stronger resistance to

dryside paint removers. Water, with the paint removers, should be avoided.

Acetate. Acetate fabrics should not be spotted with general formula, which contains alcohol. As with silk, light colored or weaker paint removers should be used. After spotting with paint removers the garment should be immediately drycleaned to avoid moisture in the air activating the alcohol in the paint remover.

Tannin formulas and protein formulas are generally safe to acetate. Acetate does have a sensitivity to acetic acid even if it is in a diluted concentration.

Denims. Denims are subject to dye crocking and color loss from mechanical action. This means that you probably can not successfully remove any ink, dryside stains and paint stains without some color loss. Use tamping action as a safer form of mechanical action rather than brushing. It may be safer to spot from the back of the fabric when possible.

Satin weave. Satin weave contains floating yarns and is the weakest of all weaves. Always spot satin from the back of the fabric to avoid chafing of the yarns. Always use the silk brush for safer spotting.

Faille and ribbed fabrics. When spotting fabrics with a rib, you should brush across the ribs rather than with the ribs. Brushing with the ribs will distort the delicate cross yarns.

Velvet. Acetate, silk and rayon velvet should not be spotted with water since distortion of the pile yarns can often occur. This distortion can usually not be corrected. Cotton and polyester velvet can be spotted but be careful to gently brush with the lay of the pile. This means that you should run your hands across the pile and find which way the pile feels smoother — which indicates the lay of the pile.

Safe Bleaching. On colored fabrics any bleach is capable of causing damage. On white fabrics some bleaches

are safer than others.

Wool and silk. Sodium bisulphite and sodium hydrosulphite are safest for bleaching and whitening wool and silk. Sodium hypochlorate can never be used. Hydrogen peroxide is the safest spot bleach that can be used.

Cotton and linen. Sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate are the safest bath bleaches. Sodium hypochlorate is safe if diluted to a 1% concentration.

Proper amounts of the 1% concentration are required for safety. In spot bleaching, the 1% concentration should be heavily diluted before use.

It is also necessary that after rinsing from bleaching, acids be used to remove residual traces of the bleach.

Dan Eisen, former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association, can be reached at (772) 579-5044, or by e-mail at danneisen39@gmail.com or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.

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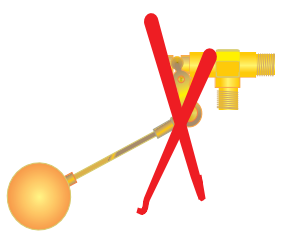
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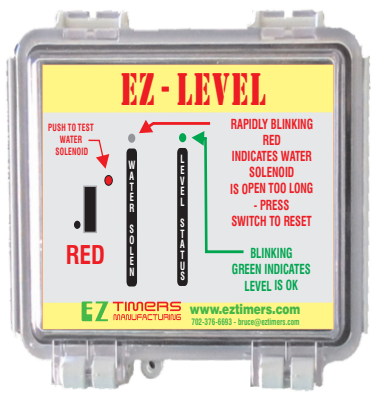


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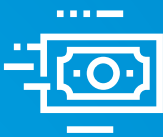
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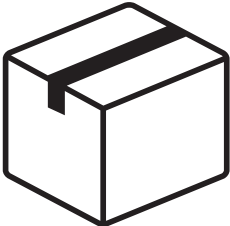
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For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yorkers, NY, was an opportunity for a clean slate. Before that, 12-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian Revolution (during which the family business in Kiev was confiscated). An old article from the Herald Tribune says...

Industry balancing act to continue in 2022
As cleaners prepare to close the door on 2021 (and perhaps throw away the key!), the last 11 months have proven to be another arduous challenge, harshly punctuated by shortages of every imaginable kind: hangers, plastic, computer chips, steel and other metals, lumber, packaging materials, zippers and...

FallFest EXPO pushes date back
Even though interest for FallFest EXPO remains high, many cleaners are too short-staffed and overburdened to spend three days devoted to it in early December. As a result, the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association have...

Light always follows darkness
by Peter Blake
It has been a long, interesting and challenging 18 months, to say the least. I know I have never worked harder or more hours than I have during the past year and a half. I also know I am not alone, and...

Don's wishlist to St. Nick: 2021 edition
by Don Derosiers
BH appy December! It is that time once again for my annual Christmas Wishlist. Every year, I send a plea to the great St. Nick for products that do not exist yet, but I believe they...

A Tribute to James Peuster
by Mark Albrecht and Jennifer Whitmarsh
As we round out 2021, let's recognize an achievement of a familiar personality in our industry... James Peuster, JP (as many know him) begins his 20th year consulting teams...

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