

Button Problems

Facts About Buttons

Hardly a garment is manufactured today that doesn't make use of either the functional value or decorative effects of buttons. Buttons are made from a variety of materials, including acetate, acrylic, caslen, celluloid, cloth, glass, ivory, leather, lucite, metal, polystyrene and wood.

Unserviceable Buttons

Many difficulties can arise with buttons because of their varied compositions and styles. The following are the two most serious problems:

- Loss Or Transfer Of Color - Buttons may be colored by one of two methods in manufacture. Where the dye is added to the material in its molten state before the button is shaped or formed, or where the dye, pigment or paint is added after the button is molded.

Buttons may transfer color due to the poor affinity the dye has for the buttons. This can occur from contact with drycleaning solvents in routine drycleaning procedures. Moisture and heat (steam) in routine pressing procedures can cause some dyes to bleed on to the cloth portion of the fabric.

- Buttons That Dissolve in Dry Cleaning Solvent - Polystyrene is one of the many plastics used for buttons. Polystyrene is soluble in perchloroethylene and may soften in petroleum solvent. A further hazard of colored polystyrene buttons is that as the button dissolves, it can release a dye which transfers to the garment, causing a dye stain that may not be removable

Identification Of Unserviceable Buttons

Because of the variety of materials used and the wide range of quality control standards by button manufacturers, it is difficult to recognize all unserviceable buttons. Furthermore, it is economically unfeasible to test every button.

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Poor Dye - Although rubbing a suspicious button with a damp cheesecloth may reveal a poor dye. The only positive identification is with the application of steam. Place a cheesecloth between the button and the fabric to act as a protective shield. Steam the button and wipe the surface with cheesecloth.

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Solubility in Dry Cleaning - Use Amyl Acetate to determine whether it will dissolve in dry cleaning. Testing with dry cleaning solvent is environmentally unsound. Apply a drop of Amyl Acetate to the back of the button, allow time to

penetrate and then rub the area. If the button feels tacky, it will most likely dissolve in dry cleaning. Any suspicious buttons should be removed from the garment for safety.

Dry Cleaning

Any large buttons, leather buttons, fancy buttons, and coated buttons should be covered with aluminum foil or commercial button protectors. Run in a load without moisture. Buttons can be further protected by buttoning up garment and turning inside out and also by limiting the cleaning cycle. To avoid button breaking, remove buttons before dry cleaning.

Spotting

Do not use paint removers and dryside solvents near leather or painted buttons. Use caution when using steam gun near dyed buttons. Especially black buttons used on a white or light colored fabric.

Wet Cleaning

Remove buttons before wetcleaning. Wet-side lubricants and chemicals can cause dyes to bleed.

Finishing

If buttons were covered in drycleaning, do not remove when finishing. Be suspicious of dark buttons on light fabrics and cover them over if they were unaffected in drycleaning. Use routine pressing procedures for garment and cover large buttons with a flannel cloth when pressure is applied to fabric.

Stain Removal procedure

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Stains from moisture and heat in finishing.

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Use tannin procedure.

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Test oily type point remover and steam.

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Test reducing and oxidizing bleaches.

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Stain from melted button.

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Use oily type paint remover and amyl acetate with proper mechanical action.

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Reclean.

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Proceed with wet side procedure as outlined above (Stains from moisture and heat (steam) in finishing.)

Summary

Unserviceable buttons can not be identified by visual examination. The large majority of buttons made today are serviceable. It is common knowledge in the button manufacturing industry that almost any button can be treated with a colorfast dye. There are many materials available that will not dissolve in dry cleaning solvents or be affected by steam in finishing. When a button manufacturer uses poor quality dyes or uses a solvent soluble material because it is cheaper, he should be responsible for the damage caused to the garment. Wherever possible, fragile or suspicious buttons should be removed or protected before dry cleaning.