

TCS Textile Consultancy Services

• *Textile Problem Analysis* • *Textile Labelling Advice* • *Education and Training*

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TITLE

**IMITATION SUEDE JACKET HAS BECOME STIFF AND BRITTLE FOLLOWING
THE SPECIFIED CARE PROCEDURE OF DRY CLEANING IN
PERCHLORETHYLENE**

Report prepared by

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ENQUIRY

The garment submitted by the client for examination and report is a lady's brown artificial suede jacket, labelled 'Dry Clean Only'. The purpose of the enquiry was to comment on the most likely cause of the garment becoming stiff and brittle and cracking after recent dry cleaning. The dry cleaner reported that the jacket was dry cleaned in in-line refrigerated perchlorethylene charged with a proprietary soap product using a normal cleaning cycle in a process that was intended to correspond with the requirements of the 'Dry Clean Only' instructions on the care labelling and no other stain removal procedures were used.

LABELLING

- **Fibre Content Labelling:** Shell – Pile 100% acetate, Black (sic – Back?) 52% cotton/48%polyester, lining - 100% polyester
- **Care Labelling:** Dry Clean Only
- **Size Labelling:** M

EXAMINATION

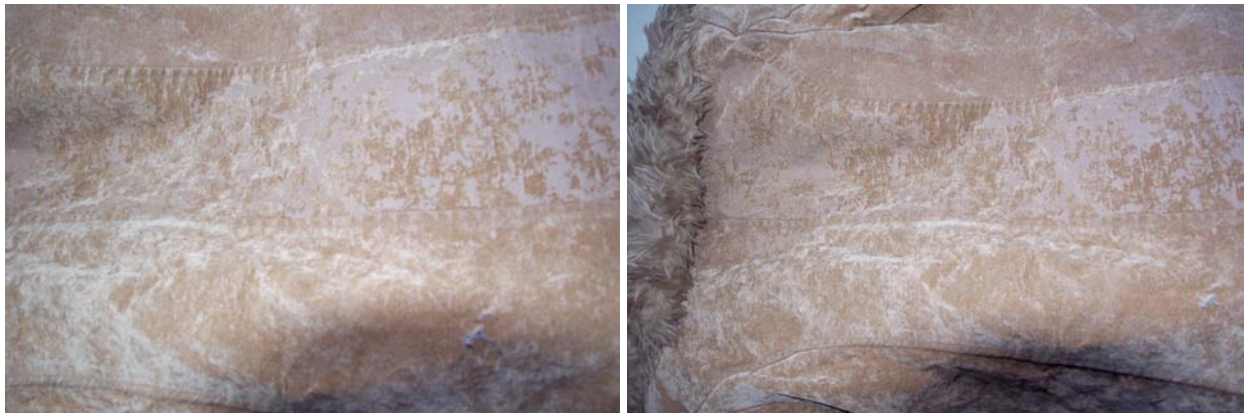
The jacket was examined and it was found that the outer shell material consisted of an imitation suede material coated on a material, such as vinyl, which had a fabric backing. It was immediately apparent that there had been extensive loss of the synthetic suede coating and that the synthetic backing material onto which the imitation suede was attached had become

completely stiff and brittle. The brittleness has caused cracking and splitting where the material had been folded.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Front and Back Photographs Showing How the Jacket Has Become Stiff and Brittle



Photographs Showing the Extensive Loss of the Imitation Suede Coating

DISCUSSION

This garment has lost much of its imitation suede coating and it has become unacceptably stiff and brittle, with resulting extensive cracking and splitting, due to the loss of plasticiser occurring during the course of a dry cleaning treatment that fully complied with the attached care labelling instructions 'Dry Clean Only'. This care label permits no other method of cleaning and the dry cleaner is entitled to assume the care labelling is correct and has no prior way of knowing whether or not a garment is likely to be damaged by the dry cleaning process.

The outer shell of this jacket consists of a plastic or polymeric type of material, probably vinyl. Such materials when used for garments require the use of chemical softening agents called 'plasticisers' which are added to give the material suppleness and pliability so that the garment will be comfortable for the wearer. Unfortunately, the perchlorethylene solvent, which has been applied to this garment in the course of dry cleaning has caused the loss of the plasticiser from the backing material resulting in its dramatic change of texture and cracking damage.

Since this severe damage to the garment has resulted from a care treatment that is specified on its attached care labelling, it is clearly incorrectly labelled as 'Dry Clean Only' – an instruction that clearly permits the use of the solvent perchlorethylene. Therefore, the responsibility for this major performance failure by the garment must lie with the manufacturer who must provide appropriate redress to the customer. The problem of this jacket becoming stiff and brittle is clearly explained in the technical bulletin **TABS-296 Vinyl Garments Turn Hard**, prepared by the International Fabricare Institute (I.F.I.) in the U.S.

CONCLUSIONS

The garment has become severely damaged following a dry cleaning treatment that fully complies with the requirements on the care labelling through no fault of the dry cleaner. The responsibility for this situation must therefore lie with the manufacturer and the garment and a copy of this report should be taken to the point of purchase so that the customer can receive appropriate redress for his loss.



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CERTIFICATE

I, Steven Donald Pyott, do hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the above information is accurate. Being an Associate of the Textile Institute, I have agreed to be bound by the terms of the Institute's Royal Charters, By-laws and Professional Code of Conduct for the time being in force. The Textile Institute accepts no responsibility for the information contained in this reply to your enquiry.



Steven Pyott

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Sometimes after drycleaning, certain synthetic leather, suede, or velvet garments become stiff. In other cases, the garment may only contain a trim that turns hard, while the rest of the garment is not adversely affected.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

The garment or trim becomes very stiff and brittle. It may look all puckered, cracked, or blistered. The fabric is now so hard that it may even stand up by itself.

WHAT CAUSED IT?

The base fabric is coated with a poly-vinyl chloride (PVC) material. Such vinyl-coated fabrics require the application of a softening agent (plasticizer) in manufacture to keep them soft and pliable. Many of these softening agents are dissolved in drycleaning solvent during cleaning. Thus, when the plasticizer is removed the material becomes stiff.

CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

There are numerous kinds of softening agents that can be used during manufacture of such fashions that are not adversely affected by normal drycleaning. Therefore, the only possible method of ensuring no damage on such vinyl coated items or trims is for the manufacturer to use softening agents that are completely durable to drycleaning.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The drycleaner has no methods to predict or prevent hardening of poorly made vinyl coated materials during the accepted drycleaning process. The manufacturer is responsible for ensuring that all components of drycleanable garments will withstand proper drycleaning without any objectionable result.



This was a soft suede-like jacket. After drycleaning it stands up by itself.

IS THERE A REMEDY?

There are some plasticizers that a cleaner can purchase to attempt re-softening of stiff vinyl garments or trims. Unfortunately, many times further cracking and blistering occurs during this attempt at restoration. Therefore, in most cases, there is no satisfactory restoration of vinyl materials that have become stiff.