

FTC Announces Amendments To the Care Labeling Rule for Apparel

Following an FTC News announcement released July 26 the Commission enacted two key changes to the 16 CFR Part 423, the Federal Care Labeling Rule for Apparel and Certain Piece Goods. The effective date for the changes was announced as the date they were published in the Federal Register, which occurred August 2, 2000.

The Commission had considered four possible changes that were contained in an NPR, Notice Of Proposed Rulemaking, in May, 1998. As reported here in previous LabelTalks, the changes considered were:

... **To require that an item that can be safely home laundered must be labeled with washing instructions.**

... **To allow an instruction for "wet drycleaning".**

... **To clarify "reasonable basis" requirements for care instructions.**

... **To harmonize water temperatures with AATCC standards.**

The Commission decided that requiring a washing instruction whenever a garment could be safely laundered constituted a fundamental change to the Rule. The Rule allows a manufacturer or importer to label a garment with either washing or dry cleaning instruction at the discretion of the manufacturer of importer. Whichever instruction is provided is still subject to existing tests for

accuracy by presentation of a "reasonable basis" for the instruction. If a garment can be safely home laundered and also safely dry cleaned it may be labeled with a dry clean care instruction with no mention of home laundering. Or, it may be labeled with laundering instructions with no mention of dry cleaning. The requirement remains unchanged that the consumer must be provided with at least one safe method for refurbishing the garment if one exists.

"Professional Wet Cleaning" was determined to be an imprecise term that lacked adequate definition to be included as a valid care instruction. Also, there is no standard for testing either the safety or efficacy of the process, which precludes development of "reasonable basis" documentation. It was suggested during public hearings that an independent agency such as AATCC should develop testing and evaluation protocols for the process. The Commission has expressed a willingness to revisit this issue if and when the industry can present a unanimously agreed on definition of the process and test methods.

The amendments that were adopted included "reasonable basis" clarification and temperature revisions. Prior to amendment, the reasonable basis standard allowed for a care instruction applicable to an entire garment based on test results of the several separate component parts. While each part individually may be safe for a particular procedure, when combined into a finished garment they may bleed from one to another during that

procedure making the instruction inaccurate for the garment. As amended, the Rule now requires that any care instruction be appropriate for the entire, complete and finished garment as well as the component parts. The Commission

also modified the water temperatures associated with "cold", "warm" and "hot" descriptors so that they coincide with those established by the American Association of Textile Colorers and Chemists (AATCC).

... the Rule now requires that any care instruction be appropriate for the entire, complete and finished garment as well as the component parts.

Another Look at Care Labeling Trends

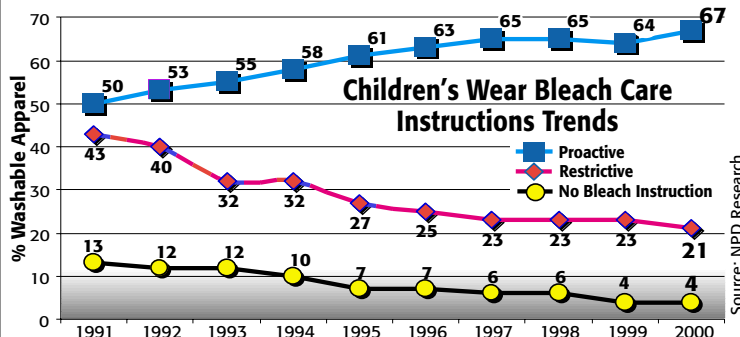


Care labeling trends has become a regular feature of LabelTalk. In past issues we have looked at Total Apparel trends and trends in Women's Wear. This issue will focus on Children's Wear.

Children's Wear is the smallest of three apparel categories, Women's, Men's and Children's.

"Bleach When Needed" or "Non-chlorine Bleach."

Every day more apparel marketers and other professionals realize the benefits of pro-active bleach care instructions. Our research, which we share freely with the trade, shows that apparel consumers intuitively understand



Still, it contributes over \$30 billion in retail sales to the industry.

Although the smallest category, Children's clothing may be the most sensitive to consumer perceptions of quality, value and durability created by care instructions. Parents feel good about their kids' clothes, and believe they are perceived as better care givers, when they are clean and neat, regardless of the style. Stains are a primary concern and parents understand that there is no more effective stain remover than bleach. Savvy marketers understand that parents want to protect their investment in their kids' clothes and feel good about themselves. That's why so many of them have made the switch to pro-active bleach instructions – either

that their investment is better protected when the garment can be laundered with some type of bleach. They know bleachability means better stain removal and overall cleaning. They translate these benefits into enhanced perceptions of "quality", "value" and "durability". Now, with some type of bleach in nearly half of the 660 million wash loads done in the U.S. every week and bleach in nearly every U.S. household, an affirmative bleach instruction also translates into "easy care" for the consumer. The 21 (and declining) percent of children's wear marketers still telling their prospective consumer to "Do Not Bleach" are finding those consumer are reading that instruction as "Do Not Buy".

For free care label assistance contact:

TEXTILE INDUSTRY AFFAIRS

The Clorox Company

(800) 424-5514

Email: info@TextileAffairs.com

Internet: www.TextileAffairs.com

© 2000. Textile Industry Affairs, The Clorox Company

Source: NPD Research