LABELTALK ALERT! FOR APPAREL / TEXTILE INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

Winter '97 Sponsored by Textile Industry Affairs

ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT FTC APPROVED CARE SYMBOLS

On July 1, 1997 the Federal Trade Commission adopted a conditional exemption to the Care Label Rule that allows you to use symbols instead of words on care labels. For the first eighteen months of this exemption period, through December, 1998, if you use symbols without words on your care labels you must provide consumers with written explanations for the symbols used on the care label on some other medium such as hang tags and package inserts.

Here are some of the most common and frequently asked questions we have received:

Why should we use care symbols instead of words?

For consumers care symbols make sense. Symbols provide the same information to everyone without language barriers. Using symbols allows for smaller, more comfortable care labels. Smaller labels also cost less and this could translate into consumer savings. The symbols are easy to understand with just five basic symbols. Dots add temperature to the procedure, underlining (or minus signs) reduce appliance action.

For manufacturers care symbols make even more sense. When harmonized with other countries, symbols will allow participation in a global marketplace where symbols will clearly communicate the same information in all countries. Smaller labels cost less to buy or manufacture and also cost less to inventory. Total inventory is further reduced by eliminating the need for different labels for different countries. The ASTM care symbols are free of trademark and user fees. The ASTM symbol system is unique in that it includes a symbol for "Non-chlorine Bleach", eliminating the need for this most common instruction in three languages.

Are the ASTM symbols global?

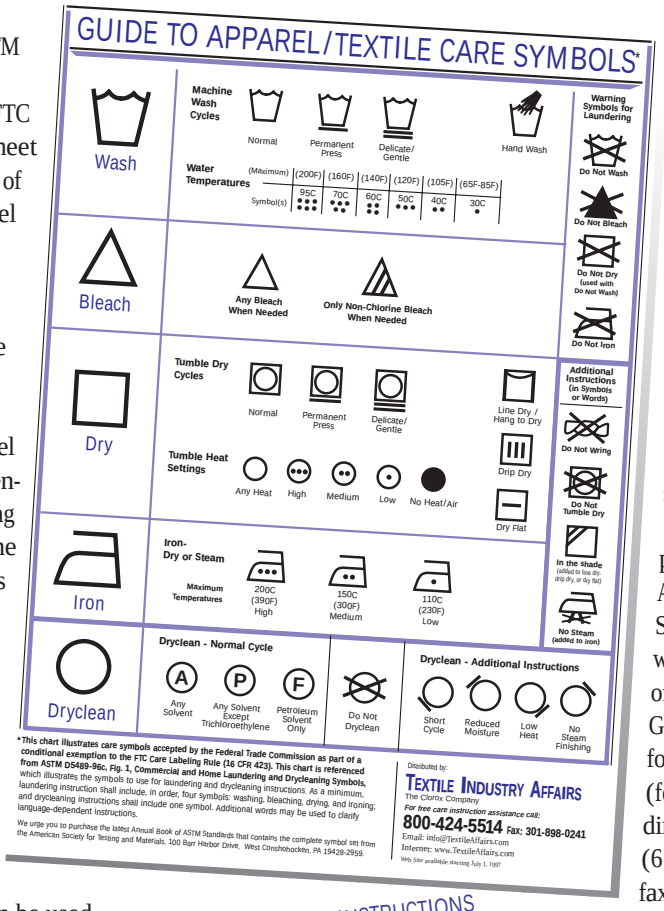
These symbols are acceptable for trade with our NAFTA trading partners, but are not yet fully adopted for use globally. The ASTM symbol system approved by the FTC was designed to meet the requirements of the U.S. Care Label Rule. The current European system does not provide symbols for all the information required by the Federal Care Label Rule. U.S. representatives are meeting with ISO to add the necessary symbols to their system to harmonize the international standard with the ASTM standard. Those negotiations are moving ahead. For now, however, only the ASTM symbols can be used in the United States.

Do we have to use symbols?

No. The conditional exemption to the Care Label Rule *allows* you to use symbols in lieu of words. It does not require you to use symbols.

Can we use symbols *and* words on our care label?

Yes. And if you do use both symbols and the associated words on your permanent care labels you do not need to add other explanatory tags or inserts as long as the words on the label explain all of the symbols used on the label.



What about instructions that don't have symbols?

Use words. The ASTM standard includes symbols for all the information required by the Federal Care Label Rule. If you want to provide more information that is not represented by a symbol you must use words. Instructions such as "Wash Before Wearing", "Wash Separately First Laundering" and "Wash With Like Colors" may be important, but are not required by the Rule. If you do provide additional instructions in words on garments intended for NAFTA trade the additional instructions still need to be in three languages.

Where can I get the symbols?

Textile Industry Affairs has created and maintains an internet web site with all the FTC approved care symbols and many related care label rule documents. Call or email Textile Industry Affairs and request a complete information packet with approved symbols charts.

We also urge you to purchase the latest Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Volume 07.02. which contains The official ASTM Standard Guide for Care Symbols for Care Instructions (for) Textile Products directly from ASTM at (610) 832-9500, or by fax at (610) 832-9555.

CARE INSTRUCTIONS INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET... www.TextileAffairs.com

NOW AVAILABLE FOR MAC OR WINDOWS

FTC CARE LABEL RULE REVISIONS & CARE SYMBOLS ON CD

Textile Industry Affairs is making available to the trade, at an industry cost of $29, a CD that includes the complete care symbol set in BMP, EPS, TIF and PIC formats. Also included are official Federal Register notices and related documents on care label issues. Call, fax or email your request to Eric J. Essma, General Manager, Textile Industry Affairs.

TEXTILE INDUSTRY AFFAIRS
The Clorox Company
800-424-5514
Fax: 301-898-0241
Email: info@TextileAffairs.com
Internet: www.TextileAffairs.com