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National Association of Institutional Linen Management

Stain Removal

Reclaim

Even when washing with perfect conditions, we sometimes get stains from particularly difficult soils. Stains can be addressed in two ways; as a reclaim re-wash formula or with specialized post-spotters.

A “reclaim” wash cycle is used to clean stained textiles so it can be returned to circulation or be reclaimed. This is a formula where you can be creative and forceful. During a reclaim formula, stained items are blasted clean by increasing time, temp, and chemical action. Don't forget to address the cause of staining.

Soil Stains

Since the textile has already been washed and may contain a pre-spotter, no flush is usually used. Go directly into a hot break bath, delaying chemical until the load is completely wet. Do not hold back on the break. You may even use two break baths if you feel it is necessary. Use a normal suds bath, then proceed into a long, hot, high ppm bleach bath. Be sure to provide enough rinses, then sour to the proper pH.

Iron or Mineral Stains

Again, the textile has already been washed, so a flush is usually not necessary. Use a warm to hot bath, add oxalic acid or rust removing product, wash for 3 to 5 minutes, then rinse 2 - 3 times. Remember pH below 5 can damage cotton fabrics. Be sure to check final pH

Unknown Stains

Some stains are from combination soils, partially removed and heat set. These stains may be removed by treating as a mineral stain then an oily oxidizable stain. First use an oxalic acid bath, followed by a high alkaline bath, then use a high ppm bleach bath. Be sure to rinse all chemicals out, and finish to proper pH.

Reclaim formulas are hard on the textiles and may shorten the normal useful life. They are not to be used as a regular part of your average wash day. Use reclaim formulas as a final step before discarding textiles. Usually 50 to 75% of stains will be removed, allowing the textiles to work for you once more.

Use your chemical supplies representative as a source of information. They should be involved any time you are seeing recurring stains anyway. He or she should be able to provide you with a comprehensive stain removal chart.

Laundry Troubleshooting Reference Guide

Problem

Textile Stains
Oily or Greasy stain
Does stain test for iron?
Iron stain
Wash with oxalic acid bath
?

Causes

Does stain absorb water?
Wash with heavy?
Yes ?

Remedies

No?
No

No
Does Chlorine Bleach remove? Yes ? Oxidizable stain Increase Chlorine Bleach ?No