

TABS

INTERNATIONAL FABRICARE INSTITUTE BULLETIN

LOSS OF SYNTHETIC SUEDE FINISH

No. 301

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

After several wearings or cleaning, the flocked suede-like fabric coating begins to come off and alters the original appearance.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

The base fabric is always lighter than the synthetic coating, so areas that no longer have any flocked finish appear lighter. The finish may be so deteriorated that it now crumbles off with light rubbing. This damage may be more noticeable in the collar, cuffs, seams, edges, or other wear areas. In other instances, there is a drastic loss of the finish all over during drycleaning to the point where it is almost completely gone.

WHAT CAUSED IT?

Over a period of time, suede-like finishes can be progressively damaged due to exposure to light, atmospheric gases, and abrasion during wear. Contact with perspiration, body oils, and oily or alcohol-based staining substances can soften the binder that holds the flocking to the base fabric, causing the finish in some areas to be flushed away during the agitation of cleaning. The adhesives used to adhere some flocked finishes are dissolved in drycleaning solvent, so more extensive damage occurs during an acceptable cleaning process.

CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

The only method of prevention is better compatibility of all the component materials used in the original manufacture of the fabric. The serviceability of the flocked-suede finishes is directly dependent on the original formulation.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The cleaner cannot prevent this type of damage during acceptable cleaning processes. If deterioration of the surface finish occurs in a relatively short period of use or



The synthetic suede finish is coming off this sport jacket from normal use and later cleaning.

storage, the manufacturer should be held accountable due to quality control deficiencies in manufacture. However, such imitation suedes are not considered to be very durable, so damage is to be expected on items well into or past their life expectancy, which is approximately two years.

IS THERE A REMEDY?

There is no method of restoration once the finish begins to deteriorate. □

TABS—301 July 2002

Written by Jim Kirby, IFI Textile Analyst