

# **SPOTTING CHEMICAL TOOLS OF TOMORROW**

By Martin Young - Young Cleaners, Concord, N.C.

PDCA's DLI District 2 Director

For those of you that are old hands to the dry cleaning industry, change may come hard. In the past, effective supplemental stain removal has been a product of using aggressive chemical tools. However, these chemical tools have been under scrutiny by the media and various governmental agencies for over twenty years. The time is at hand for all of us in garment care to stop and take a fresh look at each and every chemical tool we are using.

We have fought a good fight, but the time has come to spend our time searching for new formulations.

In the early 90's the most common immersion solution used in dry cleaning; caught the attention of Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency. Alternatives to perchloroethylene have rapidly taken a large share of the market. If the upcoming Clean Show in Las Vegas is to be used as a barometer, you will be hard pressed to find a perc dry cleaning machine on the floor of the exhibition hall. Quality results are still available, but, at the expense of longer run times. Multisolvent machines are available; using less aggressive, but more environmentally friendly, immersion solutions.

The "machine" is going to require some assistance if high quality is to be achieved and maintained. Unfortunately, the traditional workhorse of supplemental stain removal, trichloroethylene, is being targeted by regulators. It is an effective tool on dryside stains and has been often used for touchup, due to its extremely high evaporation rate. This is another case where aggressiveness will have to be replaced by an equally effective, but slower acting chemical tool.

Do not wait until the last moment. Start today to research and test alternatives to removing things like acrylic nail polish, liquid paper, and latex paint. Pay attention to trade magazines; both the articles and the advertising. You can rest assured that the manufacturers of spotting chemicals are working hard to stay ahead of anticipated regulations. The days of simply processing garments through a perchloroethylene dry cleaning machine are quickly coming to an end. The use of trichloroethylene, even in small amounts at the spotting board, seem to be numbered. Start today to re-equip your plant with the chemical tools of tomorrow.

In the meantime, I recommend that you add a bottle to the tray on your spotting board, amyl acetate. Acting as a co-solvent/catalyst, it can boost the effectiveness of

your current dryside spotters without using trichloroethylene. Apply your normal spotter and light mechanical action. If the results are less than expected; place a drop of amyl acetate on the area and apply additional light mechanical action. This should improve results. Flush the area with a general spotter/ leveling agent and dry clean as normal.

I will keep looking and testing. One warning, though. I am seeing some "alternatives" to trichloroethylene that are using various concentrations of ACETONE to boost power. There are far too many acetate linings and blends, for me to give the green light to acetone in any concentration. Time will tell, but, melted acetate is a claim you can not deny.