

Critical is quality

Denis Begasse, of Fanafel, argues that performance and not price should be the decisive purchasing factor when choosing padding.

There is “padding” and then there is “padding.” In the motor industry, there are the top-of-the-range premium vehicles, designed for improved comfort and better performance; there are the mid-range vehicles for good performance at a cheaper price; and then there are the bottom-of-the-range vehicles available at a budget price with few of the performance and comfort features of higher-priced ones.

All are motor vehicles and are designed to perform the same basic function – to transport people to their required destination. There are, however, great differences in overall quality and prices of the vehicles.

In today’s increasingly tough economic environment the intrinsic qualities of the various types of padding available are often overlooked with price being the decisive purchasing factor. More often than not for the international launderer, such a choice will result in poor ironer productivity as well as a poor finish of the linen.

As big diameter and fast-running ironers become more popular, the mechanical strength and the high air permeability of the needled felt, as well as the type of fibre used are of premium importance – the mechanical strength is achieved by using special polyester multifilament yarns in the internal scrim and a special thicker polyester fibre with higher resistance to the destructive hydrolytic effect.

This special high denier fibre will give a longer working life and a much higher exhaust steam suction allowing padding to run much dryer and increasing the ironer output.

Padding is, however, due to its textile properties, by far the weakest element of the washing and finishing process. If a problem occurs during the washing process, or if the ironer has not been properly maintained, the padding will be the first to show the signs and could deteriorate rapidly due to either or both chemical or mechanical reasons.

There are some basic rules which should be followed to ensure that padding achieves its full working life:

1. Make sure you choose a high tensile strength and special high permeability needled felt.
2. Ensure that the padding has been properly mounted and run-in by backing the needled felt.
3. Check the spring padding as well as the roll, chest and bridge alignments.
4. Make sure that the bed is cleaned and properly waxed before processing begins.
5. Check that the residual PH of the linen is as close as possible to neutral or slightly on the acid side.
6. Check each individual vacuum fan as well as the suction on the roll with a vacuum tester.
7. Ensure that the steam pressure is regular – not too low, otherwise the gap between roll and bed will narrow and finally break the padding.
8. Check the temperature level all along the bed and also the steam traps, to avoid droplets which will cool down the bed temperature.

POLYESTER VERSUS META ARAMID OPTIONS:

It is to the benefit of the launderer to use meta aramid needled felt only when it is absolutely necessary – for example when the working temperature of the ironer is above 10/11 bar steam pressure or when the ironer is oil heated, argues Denis Begasse, Fanafel.

To expect padding to last forever on the ironer and hence to choose meta aramid needled felt on this basis, represents a false economy, says Mr. Begasse. After many months of work, the padding will be extremely hard and dirty leaving the ironers with a lower output and a poor finish to the linen. Therefore, Mr. Begasse advises, when the working temperature allows it, the most economical and quality-beneficial solution is to ensure that padding replacement takes place more often – with a high air permeability, high quality polyester needled felt used to maintain a high output and a premium finish of the linen.

Laundry and Cleaning News. International Edition. January 1999.