ABRASION RESISTANCE... Here's the Rub!

Many showroom fabrics carry information on their labels (or on related materials) about performance characteristics.

Common specifications found on fabrics include colorfastness to light, cleaning code, flammability and abrasion resistance. Based on our experience, we are convinced that abrasion resistance may be the most misunderstood of these specifications.

How is it Measured?
Abrasion resistance is measured using a machine (Wyzenbeek) which rubs a fabric specimen with a second fabric, usually a cotton duck.

Without getting too detailed about the specifics of the test, each cycle of the machine rubs the cotton duck forward over the test fabric and then back again to the starting position. The forward and back cycle is called a double rub.

There is a second type of machine (Martindale) that rubs the fabric in an elliptical pattern. This type of machine is used very commonly in Europe, but less frequently in the U.S.

The failure point of the test is reached when there are two yarns breaks or when there is appreciable wear.

But it Says "Heavy Duty"
The problems begin when abrasion test ratings are used to decide whether or not a fabric is suitable for a particular use. An interior designer recently commented to us that a “heavy duty” abrasion rating had helped her decide to use rayon chenille on a family room sofa. She assumed that this specification meant that the fabric would easily withstand the above-average wear of a sofa that gets used every day.

Unfortunately, she was wrong. The sofa looked terrible in short order. The fabric didn’t wear out... it uglied out!

Fabric Group Weighs In
Abrasive wear is not even in the top three reasons for performance failure of fabrics. ACT (Association for Contract Textiles) recently did a survey of their member companies and found that the most common problems were:

1. Pilling
2. Seam slippage
3. Cleaning issues

ACT has even stated, “…abrasion test results are very misleading in terms of actual endurance in the field.”

We would probably take that one step further. It is our opinion that, for typical residential and general contract upholstery, abrasion performance results are all but irrelevant. The exceptions to this would be those installations considered truly heavy-duty (such as hotel guest rooms and retail seating) or extreme (transportation terminals, lecture halls, casino gambling areas, etc.).
Cleanability is Key
Abrasion test results are never going to point out what we think is the most important factor in long-term appearance maintenance: possible issues with cleaning. If spots and soils can’t be cleaned from a fabric, the problems will become apparent rather quickly.

We previously mentioned the rayon chenille that was specified partly because of a very good abrasion test rating. The fabric failed because the pile developed “spots” that were caused by rayon’s tendency to lay flat and a luster that usually accentuates the problem.

This type of information is not on a fabric label. But, we know where you can get it...

The Aftercare Pros!
Because the textiles world is always changing, Fiber-Seal is ready to help designers and clients with our comments about the suitability of their fabric choices. If you need help please call us!

Of course, Fiber-Seal products are effective on all types of fabrics and floor coverings and our aftercare service helps your clients effortlessly enjoy the beautiful interior you’ve created!

Designer’s Corner
Visit us online today at www.FiberSeal.com to find the local Service Center nearest you. Also, there are dozens of articles written on everything from Bamboo Fabrics to Flame Retardants. Drop by and see all of the FiberFacts and Textile Tip publications in Designer’s Corner.

You can also connect with us on our social media networks!

Need Help With Fabric Cleaning Or Fabric Protection?

Your local Fiber-Seal Service Center is ready to help and just a few clicks away... find out which one is closest to you by visiting www.FiberSeal.com/Locations.

Or, you can always give us a call at 214.333.9400 or email us at info@FiberSeal.com.