



**GUILD  
OF CLEANERS  
& LAUNDERERS**

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AMBER ALERT

# Amber Alert

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## Advice For Customers On Curtain Aftercare

### Curtain Service, and Furnishing Fabric Problems

Cellulosic textiles and silk which are commonly used in curtains and furnishings are particularly susceptible to damage by ultraviolet rays through exposure to sunlight.

Prolonged and continued exposure frequently has an adverse affect on fabric dyes, resulting in fading over time resulting lack of uniformity in the colour of your curtains as well as other drapery, as some parts will be affected by the sunlight and undergo alteration in colour composition.

Ultraviolet light bleaches photographs, destroys paper, fades pigments, bleaches and breaks down finishes on wood, attacks water colours, fur and feathers and seriously weakens textiles.

Sun damage is cumulative and irreversible. There are no clever fixes to restore sun-damaged materials. South facing windows in particular can expose furnishings and upholstery to a significantly greater risk from the damaging effects of sunlight. Natural yarns like cotton or silk are particularly at risk.

### Why does it happen.

It's science! Ultraviolet light catalyses a reaction between the water present in all fabrics and atmospheric oxygen to create hydrogen peroxide. This is a bleaching agent and breaks down the chemical bonds that give dyes their colour. There's even a fancy word for it – photodegradation. So it's not the fabric fading, it's the dye that has been discoloured. Also, it's not just the colour, as the chemical bonds break down, the fabric can become brittle and prone to breakage.

### Prevention is the best cure.

Protection from direct sunlight is recommended, if your window are exposed, especially to sun if south or south west facing, to stop the early breakdown of your furnishing fabric, and this affects curtains because of their position. All fabrics will eventually fade, but you can take some steps to delay the process considerably. You could get your windows tinted – some tints can block 99% of harmful UV rays! But a cost effective option is to ensure your curtains have a good quality sunscreen lining. This will protect your drapes, and your home furnishings. Treat your windows with a protective coating that will block ultraviolet rays of sunlight from infiltrating the room. Using a solar tinting film on your windows can help reduce the amount of direct sunlight, and limit its damaging effects on your draperies. Transparent window coverings are also available if you prefer to have your windows retain their clear nature, while protecting your draperies from sunlight.

### Here are some more ideas:

Arrange your decor so fabrics are kept out of direct sunlight, and try to rearrange regularly to reduce constant exposure of one side. If your furniture has removable cushions, make sure you flip and rotate them regularly to minimise exposure of one upholstery surface. For curtains, make sure the track is wide enough so curtains can be pulled well back from the window. Use a good quality lining. Not only does this provide insulation but it will help to protect your curtains from sun damage.

Continued on page 2

# Amber Alert

November 2014 issue A033 Page 2 Curtain After Care

Swap curtains occasionally from one side of the track to the other, to avoid having one edge constantly exposed to sunlight. Make sure the curtains are sufficiently full to allow for re-edging if the fabric does fade. Invest in sheer curtains that remain closed during the day, not only does this reduce the effects of the sun, but provides privacy as well.

By taking some of these simple steps, you could extend the life of your soft furnishings and upholstery and keep it beautiful for years to come! Sunlight has a pronounced effect on the colour vibrancy and lustre of draperies. It causes fading and disintegration of fabrics if certain measures are not in place.

## **SHRINKAGE of CURTAINS**

Curtain fabric is unavoidably stretched during the weaving process as tension is necessary on the warp yarns, which run from the top to the bottom of the fabric that is why shrinkage almost always occurs in the length on finished curtains.

The British and European Standard for curtains allows for up to 3% relaxation on curtain fabrics, to compensate for this, manufacturers will sometimes allow for extra material in the hem. However, this extra material is very often of no practical use by the time you the customer want the curtains cleaned as there is often a wear line on the hem of full length curtains which would show visibly if the curtains were lengthened by letting down the hem. Some manufacturers will pre-shrink their fabric before it is sent to be made up into curtain material, but the majority of curtain fabric is not pre-shrunk, retailers, unfortunately, will rarely bring the risk of shrinkage to their customer's attention. It then falls to the dry cleaner to advise our customer of this potential risk to avoid a disappointed customer.