



**IWEISS**

# **USE, CARE, AND CLEANING OF STAGE DRAPERIES**

**Anyplace Theater  
Job Name**

MONTH, 2020

**IWEISS.COM**

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# **USE, CARE, AND CLEANING OF STAGE DRAPERIES**

## **DRAPERIES**

If properly cared for, a set of stage draperies can last for many years. When abused, they can be completely ruined in a few years. Your drapery setting represents an investment of many thousands of dollars and in future years replacement costs may be even greater.

## **CLEANLINESS**

Dust is the greatest enemy of any napped drapery. It will discolor the finish, affect the nap, and weaken the threads of the fabric itself. Make it a practice to keep your stage scrupulously clean in order to minimize the amount of dust in the area. Use only the best quality cleaning equipment. There are special wide-base brooms and mops, and special sweeping compounds made for cleaning the stage floor. Ask several suppliers of janitorial products about availability and use of these items.

Use sweeping equipment sparingly to control flying dust. Periodically, damp mop the stage to remove oily residues. A large doormat or section of carpeting should be placed at all entrances to the stage in order to minimize tracking in dirt.

A floor broom should never be used to sweep stage curtains, as the oils used in “dust down” sawdust, or brooming compounds, will penetrate the fabric and cause soiling of the fabric.

When not in use, make it a practice to fly your draperies to their out position. This will help prevent hand stains, tears, vandalism, etc., by keeping them out of reach.



## **FLAME RESISTANCE OF DRAPERY FABRIC**

By law, all stage drapery fabrics must be treated for flame resistance. This does not mean fireproof, but rather that the treated fabric will char under continuous flame or heat but not flame or smolder by and of itself. Great care should be taken to insure that the drapes do not come into direct contact with lighting instruments or interrupt the light stream in close proximity to an instrument. Unwisely discoloration, charred spots, or holes could result.



## **FLAME RESISTANCE OF DRAPERY FABRIC** CONTINUED

Although we will provide an Affidavit of Flameproofing certifying the fabric and listing the FDNY Acceptance number, certain drapery samples should be made available for field testing. The most common test performed by the FDNY Inspectors, who should inspect at least once a year, is known as the Open Flame Test. The Inspector physically cuts a piece of the drapery item and exposes it to an open flame. If the fabric meets Code, the Inspector is satisfied. If it fails the minimum requirements, the Inspector will cite that specific item. Obviously, you want to direct the Inspector to these samples so he/she does not cut into the main body of the drape.

Again, an Affidavit of Flameproofing will be provided for review by an Inspector upon arrival, but an experienced Inspector has the right to conduct the Open Flame Test, regardless of certification.

IFR Fabrics are manufactured from polyester yarns to meet NFPA 701 testing protocol without any additional treatment. These fabrics are expected to retain their IFR properties for the life of the material, however, this cannot be guaranteed. Conditions of use including time, humidity, excessive dust or dirt, etc., may adversely affect the flame retardant capabilities. A yearly field test to verify the status is strongly recommended.



Should a curtain or cyclorama be accidentally spotted or soiled, clean as soon as possible. If left on the fabric for a long time, soil spots tend to set and are much more difficult to remove. Use caution when cleaning water-based spots (soft drinks, coffee, etc.). The flame retardant compounds may be removed from the fabric, and an unsafe condition will exist. Refer to the flame proofing certificates included in this manual for proper fabric cleaning techniques.

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## **AIR FLOW**

If your stage is forced-air ventilated or air conditioned, see that the air ducts do not discharge directly onto the draperies. Continuous concentrated air movement can loosen the pile, and cause a build-up of dirt. Our installers have been cautioned about this problem, but often air-handling equipment is adjusted after final completion of the stage installation.

## **TEARS AND SNAGS**

The nap of velour fabrics is not tightly locked into the mesh of the backing. If a tear or cut occurs, the nap will loosen near the tear and may fall out. It is wise to repair tears immediately for this reason.

For quick, temporary repairs use duct tape. Pull the edges of the tear together and apply the tape to the back of the curtain. Later on a permanent repair can be made with iron-on tape of the same approximate color as the curtain, or the tear can be sewn using an overcast stitch. At a distance, these repairs will hardly be visible.

## **REMOVAL, PACKING, AND STORAGE OF STAGE DRAPERY**

In your theater, it may become necessary to remove and store certain drapery, or relocate to different battens for different types of productions. In the case of velour masking pieces, borders, legs, black-outs, etc., proceed in the following manner:

First, sweep the stage. Then lower the batten and remove any bottom pipe (inside the bottom hem). Make sure that the bottom edge of the velour is pulled downstage, towards the audience, enough to insure that the face fabric does not touch the floor, then continue to lower the batten.

Lock off the batten and unload the counterweight arbor. Untie the curtain and lay it on its back, fully spread out, fold the curtain face-to-face, hem-to-crown. Repeat until you have a workable folding [about three (3) feet]. Then fold each end in to center and repeat until you have a workable bundle. Storage hampers should be provided and labeled for best storage results. Store curtains in a clean, dry place.

To re-hang, lay the bundle under the batten center. Fold out the bundle across the stage. Note that the heading is marked with a center line, and often a different colored tie-line. Tie this point on the center mark of the batten. Then tie successively from center to end (the knot is a simple bow). Load the counterweight arbor with weight equal to the curtain. Slowly raise the batten and make sure the curtain does not snag or foul on any obstruction. When the bottom of the drape is even with your waist, re-insert the bottom stretcher pipe—if any—to stretch the drape and keep it wrinkle-free. If you always follow this pattern, you will find that you will spend the minimum time handling the curtains, and the curtain face will always be protected.

