

## Washing Soot Damaged Clothes

1. Decide if the garment was washable or drycleanable before the smoke damage.
2. If drycleanable (wools having interfacings, linings, tailored styling), send to cleaners as soon as possible and explain the problem.
3. If washable, follow these steps:
  - \* Separate clothes by amount of soot or smoke deposit. Keep those that have least, moderate, and heavy deposits of smoke or soot separate. (Soot can be transferred from heavily soiled items to less soiled one during the wash.)
  - \* Separate each of these groups into those that are cottons or synthetics.
  - \* With the excessively sooty, shake out doors to remove any possible dry particulate matter before washing.
  - \* Use full amount of detergent recommended by the detergent manufacturer for each wash load.
  - \* Add 1 cup of water conditioner (Calgon, Arm & Hammer) **and** 1/2 cup all-fabric bleach with detergent.
  - \* Use full water level and hot or warm water as appropriate. Synthetics should be washed in warm water to avoid wrinkling in the spin cycle.
  - \* Do not overload the washer.
  - \* For heavily soiled items, wash at least two times.
  - \* After second wash, if soot is not visible, let clothing air dry (not in heated dryer) and check for smoke odor.
  - \* If smoke odor remains, air outdoors for a few hours, then wash again as before. Right after washing, detergent perfumes may mask odor, but smoke odor may return as perfumedissipates.
- \* Smoke odor may be more difficult to remove from:
  - cotton and/or cotton blend items
  - thick blankets/bedspreads, etc.
  - quilted jackets, fiber-filled items
4. Remember that if textiles were exposed to sparks and high heat during the fire, they may have burned or melted in spots that were obscured by soot. After cleaning, small holes may show up. Bleaching further weakens cellulosic (cotton, linen, ramie, rayon) fabric. Do not bleach silk or wool, these can dissolve in liquid chlorine bleach. Some synthetics may be permanently deformed or yellowed from excess heat of the fire and may not be salvagable.
5. Look for products containing tri-sodium phosphate among cleaning and detergent supplies. This is the chemical most often recommended for effective cleaning.

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