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# GUIDE TO THE CANADIAN CARE LABELLING PROGRAM



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	INTRODUCTION .....	1
II	THE CANADIAN CARE LABELLING PROGRAM .....	1
III	ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM .....	2
IV	IMPORTANCE OF CARE LABELLING .....	2
V	MESSAGE CONVEYED BY CANADIAN CARE LABELS .....	3
VI	ELIGIBILITY TO USE CANADIAN CARE SYMBOLS .....	3
VII	DESCRIPTION OF THE CANADIAN CARE SYMBOLS .....	3
	1. Basic Symbols .....	3
	2. Colours of Symbols .....	4
	3. Prohibitive Symbols .....	4
	4. Temperature Markings .....	4
	a) Washing Symbol .....	4
	b) Ironing Symbol .....	4
	5. Colour of Descriptive Markings .....	4
VIII	USE OF THE CANADIAN CARE SYMBOLS .....	5
	1. Selection of Appropriate Symbols .....	5
	2. Required Tests .....	5
	3. Textile Testing Laboratories .....	5
	4. Required Number of Symbols .....	5
	5. Order of Symbols .....	6
	6. Acceptable Standards for Colourfastness and Dimensional Stability .....	6
	7. Penalties for Misuse of the Care Symbols .....	7

IX	SUPPLEMENTARY CARE INFORMATION .....	7
X	REQUIREMENTS FOR CANADIAN CARE LABELS .....	8
	1. Type of Material for Label .....	8
	2. Location of Label .....	8
	3. Permanency of Label .....	8
	4. Use of Care Symbols on Packaging .....	8
XI	"LOW LABELLING" .....	9
XII	FURTHER ASSISTANCE .....	9

## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A	TEXTILE TESTING LABORATORIES .....	10
APPENDIX B	COMPETITION BUREAU OFFICES .....	11
APPENDIX C	CANADIAN GENERAL STANDARDS BOARD (CGSB) ORDER FORM .....	12

## I. INTRODUCTION

This guide outlines the purpose and requirements of the Canadian Care Labelling Program. This information is issued for convenience of reference only and should be read in conjunction with the *National Standard of Canada - Care Labelling of Textiles (CAN/CGSB-86.1-M91)* and the relevant tests in *Textile Test Methods (CAN/CGSB-4.2)*.

Copies of these standards may be obtained for a fee from the following address:

Canadian General Standards Board  
Sales Centre (walk-in location)  
11 Laurier Street,  
Place du Portage, Phase III  
6B1  
Hull, Quebec  
K1A 0S5  
Telephone: (819) 956-0425  
1-800-665-2472 (within Canada)  
Facsimile: (819) 956-5644  
Internet: <http://www.pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb>

An order form for these standards is provided as Appendix C for your convenience.

While this bulletin relates specifically to the Canadian Care Labelling Program and the use of the Canadian Care Symbols, written instructions and other symbol systems (ISO, ASTM, etc.) may also be used in Canada, provided that the method of care represented by the symbols or words is accurate.

## II. THE CANADIAN CARE LABELLING PROGRAM

This voluntary program provides a means by which information on the care of textile articles can be conveyed to the consumer in a simple and easily understood format. The program is based on a system of five basic symbols illustrated in the three conventional "traffic light" colours. Each of the symbols, and their variations, are outlined in section 8 of the *National Standard of Canada - Care Labelling of Textiles*.

Although the program is based on symbols, words in both English and French may be used to convey special instructions not covered by the appropriate symbol (see p.6 item IX).

The Canadian Care Labelling Program relates to the properties of colourfastness, dimensional stability, effect of retained chlorine (bleach) and maximum safe ironing temperature. In addition, the use of this system signifies that as a result of the restorative treatment, there shall be no appreciable change in the appearance of the article. The properties which may be assessed for change in appearance include but are not limited to:

- seam puckering due to differential shrinkage of panels;
- blistering, delamination or deterioration of coated, bonded, laminated and fused fabrics;
- staining of fusibles;
- fraying of seams;
- deterioration of fasteners;
- performance of textile or non-textile trim.

The system is not intended to be used for upholstered furniture, mattresses, carpets, articles that are predominantly leather and/or fur, yarns and hosiery. The success of the program rests on the integrity of the manufacturers, importers and consumers who use it.

### **III. ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM**

The Competition Bureau, which is part of Industry Canada, is responsible for administering the program and responding to complaints. Textile articles are periodically subjected to laboratory analysis for the verification of the care information provided.

### **IV. IMPORTANCE OF CARE LABELLING**

Care labelling is an important aid to consumers, dry-cleaners and commercial laundering establishments as it provides information on the most appropriate care procedure for a given textile article.

In addition, care labelling enables consumers to choose textiles on the basis of the care method required and reduces both economic loss and the number of complaints resulting from inappropriate cleaning procedures.

## **V. MESSAGE CONVEYED BY CANADIAN CARE LABELS**

The care label indicates to the consumer the most appropriate method of care for an article, and gives the consumer some assurance that the article can be submitted to the recommended care instructions without being damaged. The method of care prescribed by the symbols applies to the entire article including components such as trim, zipper, belt, buttons, lining and interlining. In the case of removable components that cannot withstand the recommended restoration procedures, it is permissible to use the care symbols provided the component to which the symbols do not apply is clearly indicated in English and French on the care label itself or on a separate label securely attached to or near the care label (e.g., “Care instructions do not apply to removable trim/Les instructions d'entretien ne s'appliquent pas à la garniture amovible”). Expressions used in relation to fibre content information as required by the *Textile Labelling and Advertising Regulations* such as "Exclusive of trim", etc., may not be used in conjunction with the care symbols.

Should a dealer choose to use the care symbols on hosiery or yarn, it should be made clear that the symbols apply only to colourfastness, effect of retained chlorine and maximum safe ironing temperature and do not apply to dimensional stability (e.g., “Care symbols do not apply to dimensional stability / Les symboles d'entretien ne s'appliquent pas à la stabilité dimensionnelle”).

## **VI. ELIGIBILITY TO USE CANADIAN CARE SYMBOLS**

All dealers may use the Canadian care symbols provided the symbols are used correctly and in accordance with all provisions of the *National Standard of Canada - Care Labelling of Textiles (CAN/CGSB-86.1-M91)*.

## **VII. DESCRIPTION OF THE CANADIAN CARE SYMBOLS**

### **1. Basic Symbols**

There are five basic symbols. The wash tub represents washing, the triangle bleaching, the square drying, the iron pressing and the circle dry-cleaning. Each symbol, its variations and meaning are outlined in sections 8.2 through 8.6 of the *National Standard of Canada - Care Labelling of Textiles (CAN/CGSB-86.1-M91)*.

## 2. Colours of Symbols

The colours to be used correspond to the three colours used in conventional traffic lights, red for "STOP", amber for "BE CAREFUL" and green for "GO AHEAD".

To ensure that the consumer does not become confused by incorrect shades, the colours of the symbols must be a reasonably close match to the colours red (Pantone 186u), amber (Pantone 116u) and green (Pantone 356u).

## 3. Prohibitive Symbols

A red crossed-out symbol may only be used when evidence can be provided that the care procedure it represents would damage the textile article. Therefore, a red crossed-out triangle must not be used on a textile article which will not be harmed by the use of chlorine bleach or a red crossed-out iron must not be used on a textile article which will not be harmed by ironing.

*NOTE:* All red symbols must be crossed-out to emphasize the prohibition of the treatment represented by that symbol.

## 4. Temperature Markings

### a) Washing Symbol

The temperatures of the wash water must be indicated in degrees Celsius. The *Standard* allows for four maximum washing temperatures: 30°C, 40°C, 50°C, and 70°C.

### b) Ironing Symbol

Ironing symbols appearing on textile articles must have a safe ironing temperature indicated within the symbol. Either dots or temperatures (°C) may be used, although dots are preferred. The temperature equivalents are as follows:

1 dot	Amber Iron	110°C
2 dots	Amber Iron	150°C
3 dots	Green Iron	200°C

## 5. Colour of Descriptive Markings

Descriptive markings such as temperature (°C) or "hand" in the washing symbols may be identified in the same colour as the relevant basic symbol or in any suitable darker colour except red and amber for green symbols; red and green for amber symbols; and amber and green for red symbols.

## VIII. USE OF THE CANADIAN CARE SYMBOLS

### 1. Selection of Appropriate Symbols

Dealers should first attempt to obtain whatever care information they can from the fabric supplier and the suppliers of the other components of the textile article such as the buttons, trim, zippers, belting, interfacing, etc.

Taking this information into consideration, dealers should then arrange to test the finished article, by using either their own facilities or a private laboratory, to assess whether all the components in the article are compatible in terms of the care method required to restore the article to an acceptable, usable condition.

### 2. Required Tests

Section 8 of the *National Standard of Canada - Care Labelling of Textiles* identifies the tests that must be performed and specifies the criteria against which each of the care symbols would be evaluated. Appendix A of the *Standard* lists the recommended test methods for the assessment of appearance changes. These tests must be performed in accordance with the *National Standard of Canada - Textile Test Methods (CAN/CGSB-4.2)*.

### 3. Textile Testing Laboratories

There are a number of private textile testing laboratories in Canada which will test articles for care labelling on a fee-for-service basis. A list of laboratories has been included in Appendix A.

### 4. Required Number of Symbols

Although it is not necessary to use all five symbols, a care label must include a sufficient number of symbols to restore the textile to an acceptable condition. In addition, since the absence of a particular symbol may imply that the missing care procedure can be safely used, it is recommended that a red crossed out symbol warning be included in those cases when the care procedure may harm the textile.

For example,

- for a textile that is normally considered bleachable in chlorine-type bleach but may in fact be damaged by it, it is desirable that the symbol warning against chlorine bleaching be shown along with the appropriate washing symbol;
- on a textile that is normally considered washable but must in fact be dry-cleaned, it is desirable that the symbol warning against washing be shown with the appropriate dry-cleaning symbol;



- on a textile that is washable but not dry-cleanable, it is desirable that the symbol warning against dry-cleaning be shown along with the appropriate washing symbol.

## 5. Order of Symbols

The symbols must appear in their logical order (washtub, triangle, square, iron, circle). This order must be maintained even if all of the symbols are not used.

## 6. Acceptable Standards for Colourfastness and Dimensional Stability \*

### *Colourfastness*

*Colour Change* - Any colour of the textile shall not show a change greater than Grey Scale 4 contrast by reference to CAN/CGSB-4.2 No. 46-96/ISO 105-A02.

*Staining* - In washing and/or in drying, textiles shall not show staining greater than Grey Scale 4 contrast, except for the nylon fibre of the multifibre fabric which shall not show staining greater than Grey Scale 3-4 contrast, by reference to CAN/CGSB-4.2 No. 47-96/ISO 105-A03.

Textiles which do not meet this requirement for staining but which meet the requirement for change in colour specified in the first paragraph may bear the washing symbol provided the words "wash separately/laver seul" are also shown on the care label.

*Exception:* In the case of textiles containing more than one colour, one of which is white or almost white, staining of the white or almost white shall not exceed Grey Scale 4-5 contrast by reference to CAN/CGSB-4.2 No. 47-96/ISO 105-A03.

### *Dimensional Stability*

*Woven textiles, including those not subject to the next paragraph:* The textile shall not shrink or stretch more than 2% in either direction or more than the maximum dimensional change shown on the care label or on a separate label securely attached to or near the care label.

*Knitted textiles, excluding coated knitted textiles and textiles having both woven and knitted components:* The textile shall not shrink or stretch in either direction more than the maximum values given below or more than the maximum dimensional change shown on the care label or on a separate label securely attached to or near the care label.

<b>Category of Knitted Textile</b>	<b>Maximum dimensional change, each direction (%)</b>
Weft-knit underwear, and sleepwear	10
Warp-knit slips, gowns, and other lingerie and sleepwear	5
Casual wear (including but not limited to T-shirts, jogging suits, sweaters)	6
Dresses, skirts, jackets, pants, coats, blouses, dress shirts	3
Home furnishing items	3

A knitted textile which does not fit into the above table may bear the care symbol provided that the maximum dimensional change, if greater than 3%, is shown on the care label or on a separate label securely attached to or near the care label

\* These criteria are available in the *Standard* CAN/CGSB-86.1-M91 from the *Canadian General Standards Board*. You will find an application form in appendix C for your convenience.

## **7. Penalties for Misuse of the Care Symbols**

Errors discovered by officials of the Competition Bureau will be discussed with the dealer identified on the disclosure label and the dealer will be asked to make the appropriate label correction. Continued misuse of the Canadian Care symbols could result in stronger action under Section 5 of the Textile Labelling Act, which prohibits a dealer from making any false or misleading representations relating to textile fibre products.

## **IX. SUPPLEMENTARY CARE INFORMATION**

When necessary, written words in English and French must be used to provide care information which is not conveyed by the symbols. For example, "Use mild detergent - no soap/Utiliser un détergent doux - pas de savon", would be added to an article for which this instruction is appropriate. For an article having one component and/or colour that meets the requirements for colourfastness but not for staining, an additional written instruction such as "Wash separately/Laver seul" must be shown.

## **X. REQUIREMENTS FOR CANADIAN CARE LABELS**

### **1. Type of Material for Label**

The *Standard* does not specify what type of material or fabric must be used for the label. However, as many consumers have complained about stiff, scratchy labels which irritate the skin, the *Standard* specifies that dealers should select a label material which will be non-irritating when it is in close contact with the skin.

### **2. Location of Label**

Although the *Standard* does not specify any one location for the care label, it must be positioned in a reasonably conspicuous area of the textile article. Inside a pant leg or a sleeve is not acceptable.

### **3. Permanency of Label**

The material used for labels, the symbols and any additional written information must be capable of withstanding the restorative treatments the symbols represent and must be applied in such a manner that they will remain legible and firmly attached for a minimum of 10 cleanings or throughout the useful life of the article, whichever is less.

An exception to this requirement has been made for piece goods which may be labelled on the end of the bolt core or spool.

### **4. Use of Care Symbols on Packaging**

As stated previously, the care label must be permanent except in the case of piece goods.

Although not required, it may be desirable to repeat the care label on the packaging of pre-packaged goods or on other non-permanent labels such as hang tags, adhesive stickers etc. This may be done by repeating the symbols exactly as they appear on the permanent label, or alternatively, it is permissible to do so in one single colour, provided the textile article itself is permanently labelled in accordance with the *Standard* and the colour used is not one of or does not bear any resemblance to the three traffic light colours.

## **XI. "LOW LABELLING"**

Low labelling, or under-labelling is illustrated by chlorine bleachable articles with a care symbol indicating "Do not use Chlorine Bleach" and washable articles with symbols indicating "Dry Clean Only". Such labelling is contrary to the *Standard* and must be avoided as it misinforms the consumer or cleaner. Every effort must be made to ensure that care labels bear full and factual information. (See also section VII, part 3 "Prohibitive Symbols")

## **XII. FURTHER ASSISTANCE**

Copies of other publications and further assistance concerning the Canadian Care Labelling Program may be obtained from your nearest Competition Bureau Office listed in Appendix B. Also copies can be obtained from our web site or by E-mail.

E-mail: [compbureau@ic.gc.ca](mailto:compbureau@ic.gc.ca)

Web site: <http://competition.ic.gc.ca>