

7 STEPS TO CLEAN FIREFIGHTING TURNOUT GEAR



We once saw dirty firefighting coats and pants as badges of honor. Now the fire service is beginning to recognize that soiled or contaminated protective garments can expose firefighters to toxins and carcinogens, spread communicable disease, absorb radiant heat, conduct electricity and can be flammable. In short, clean PPE can help you live longer.

NFPA 1851 says to evaluate gear after each use to determine the appropriate cleaning level. This includes instructions for routine cleanings at the scene and advanced cleaning at least once a year. Here are seven steps to give your gear that advanced cleaning.



1. CLEAN BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE SCENE

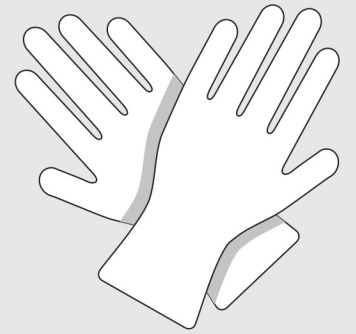
Hose, brush or wipe away the large, gross contaminants following overhaul. This routine cleaning reduces the amount of particles you take into the rig and the firehouse bay. If a routine cleaning doesn't do the job, give the PPE an advanced cleaning.



NOTE: Step one constitutes a routine cleaning that should be done at the scene. Steps two through six constitute an advanced cleaning, done at least once a year.

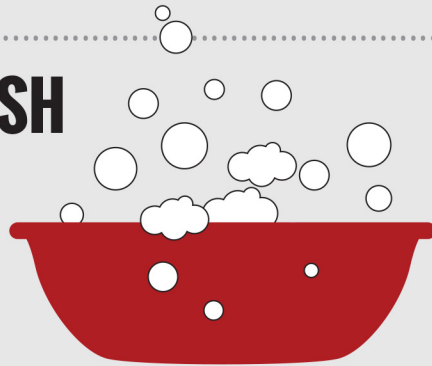
2. INSPECT AND DISASSEMBLE

Wear exam gloves and eye protection during this process. Separate the pants and coat outer shell, liner and drag rescue device. Look for deep stains, tears, holes and other damage. Any holes, rips or other damage needs to be repaired before the gear is returned to service. Turn the liner inside out and close all of the shell's zippers, clasps and hook and loop tapes.



3. PRESOAK AND WASH

Pretreat heavily soiled or spotted areas prior to machine laundering. Wash the garments in a front loader extractor or machine specifically dedicated for PPE. Use water temperature no higher than 105°F and a detergent with a pH factor between 6 and 10.5. The washing machine g-force must not exceed 100g for all gear.



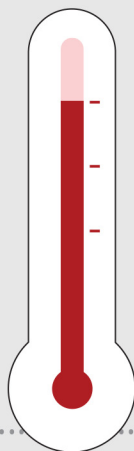
4. RE-INSPECT

Once the gear is done washing, inspect it again for stubborn stains. If the gear is not clean, repeat step 3.



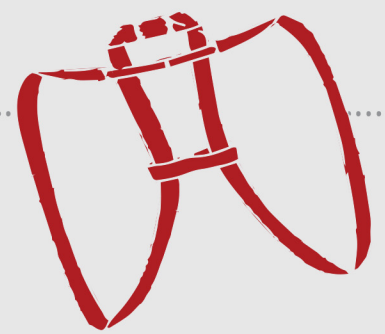
5. DRYING

Dry the gear in an area with good ventilation; never dry in direct sunlight, which can degrade the high-temperature fabrics. When machine drying, fasten all closures and use a no-heat or air-dry option. If no-heat or air-dry is not an option, do not allow the basket temperature to exceed 105°F.



6. REASSEMBLE

When the gear is fully dry, follow the manufacturer's instructions to reinstall the drag rescue device in the coat and the liners into the outer shells. Check that all of the closures are properly secure and that the drag rescue device is properly installed.



7. STORAGE

Keep clean gear in a dry, well-ventilated area out of direct sunlight and away from indoor light sources; they also produce harmful UV rays. This will keep the materials that make up the PPE from degrading while stored in the station.



ONLINE RESOURCES

- GlobeTurnoutGear.com
- PPE101.com
- FireRescue1.com