

Industrial workers risking safety by washing workwear at home

More than half of industrial workers are washing their workwear and protective clothing at home and potentially risking their safety, new research has found. In a survey conducted among senior decision makers in firms that are currently buying their garments direct from workwear providers, it was revealed that as many as 77 per cent of employees are cleaning and maintaining their professional garments themselves, which can lead to the premature deterioration of fabrics and, particularly in the case of high-visibility clothing, render them ineffective and non-compliant with safety regulations.

The research also found the majority of businesses asked viewed workwear as a disposable item that was the source of considerable hidden costs. Nine out of 10 companies replace damaged garments as opposed to repairing them, raising the total spend on workwear per employee, which currently sits at approximately anywhere between £450 and £1,000 each year. However, this attitude towards work clothing could come as a result of a perceived lack of product value as an improvement in quality was one of the top answers given when the respondents were asked what their current supplier could do better.

Conducted with engineering, manufacturing, petrochemical and transport companies, the research was commissioned by Berendsen, the UK's leading fully managed workwear provider. Commenting on the findings, Kiratpal Randhawa, UK Product Marketing Manager for Workwear at Berendsen, said: "The impact professional clothing can have on a firm appears to be somewhat underestimated, yet it is an essential business component in most industries. Aside from the significant hidden costs, it is alarming to discover that so many employees are laundering their workwear at home and potentially unknowingly limiting the effectiveness of the fabrics, which can pose a threat to their safety. Employers have a duty to provide and maintain suitable garments for their staff so perhaps it is time to look at fully managed outsourced services as a more reliable alternative to purchasing."

The findings of Berendsen's research echo those of a 2014 European Textile Services Association (ETSA) study that found a staggering 92 per cent of UK workers were laundering their workwear at home at the time. The textile rental and services industry trade body warned of the dangers of this risky practice, which can reduce the effectiveness of electrostatic ability, fire-retardancy, high visibility and chemical repellence, and said employers were in danger of losing control of their duty of care. Ultimately, ETSA insisted industrial laundering through an established firm, such as Berendsen, is the optimal way to improve each garment's lifetime, and uphold its safety properties and protection for wearers.

For further information about Berendsen's workwear services visit <http://www.berendsen.co.uk/workwear>.

About Berendsen

Berendsen provides innovative fully managed workwear services to customers in the industrial, automotive maintenance, metalworking, catering and public sectors. With over 7,000 employees working at 45 sites across the UK, Berendsen is able to provide dynamic, cost effective solutions thanks to its experience and know how in textiles, business operations and logistics. Berendsen has a strong commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility and holds the Carbon Trust Standard certificates demonstrating its achievement in reducing both carbon and water usage. The company is part of Berendsen plc, a leading provider of textile services in the UK.

Berendsen UK Ltd. Intec 3, Intec Business Park, Wade Road, Basingstoke, RG24 8NE Web: <http://www.berendsen.co.uk/>