

Care & Maintenance of Synthetic IFR Drapes

IFR refers to Inherently Flame Retardant. Made with non-combustible elements, IFR fabric is inherently and permanently flame resistant for the life of the fabric, without the addition of flame-retardant chemicals. The flame resistance will NOT wash out or wear out but should be kept dust free. Manufactured to meet or exceed the following standards: AS1530 Part 2 & 3.

Storage

The best way to store drapes is to leave them hanging if possible. If you need to take them down from their hanging positions to be stored, the best way to store them is in canvas hampers (expensive, but easy to move) or in storage bags.

Folding your drapes for storage.

The best option is to keep the drapes hanging if possible. Ensure the floor is clean and dry before dropping the drapes in. Clean them before folding (see C. Periodic Cleaning)

Ensure the floor is clean and dry before dropping the cloth in.

Lay the cloth on its back (seams down, right side up) Take the opportunity to carefully vacuum the cloth to remove any dust and cobwebs.

Fold vertically first – If the drapes are to be stored in a hamper or a bag, try to fold them to a size that will fit.

Start at the first or second seam from the edge of the drape (depending on fullness). Hold the drape at both the top and bottom and pull that seam over to the edge. Depending on the drop you may need one or more people in the middle to assist.

Adjust the drape so that the seams line up from top to bottom. On a drape with fullness the bottom will be wider than the top.

Continue folding the drape along the seam lines until you have a long flat folded curtain. With a curtain with fullness tuck in the additional fabric on the bottom edge until you have a similar width all the way along.



Now fold the drapes into a square, starting at the bottom edge and folding down to a size to fit your storage bag or hamper.

If possible, put a drop cloth under the bottom edge to assist in lifting the folded cloth, or you could fold directly into a bag or hamper.

It is especially important that a cloth with chain in the hem is folded and stored with the chain at the bottom of the curtain, as the weight of the chain may imprint on the velvet below it.



Do NOT stack heavy items onto a bagged drape, as this may cause crushing of the nap, and permanently scar the fabric.

When you next hang the drapes, get them up a few days prior to any performances. Any residual wrinkling should drop out.

Periodic cleaning.

The major concern of drapes hanging in a theatre, apart from mechanical damage, is the collection of dust on, and within, the nap of velvet. To prevent this, keep the theatre as clean as is practicable.

Periodically, but not less than once per year, work to remove the dust from the drapes. Shake them out; you will see dust flying from the drapes. Then take a soft-bristle broom and sweep the drapes to remove even more dust or use a vacuum.

If you are going to lay the drapes onto the stage to sweep them, rather than using a ladder or lift, clean the stage prior to lowering the drapes and lay plastic or paper onto the floor first. We recommended that you have one broom, or set of brooms, dedicated to cleaning the drapes, so that you do not inadvertently further soil the drapes with debris caught in the bristles of a floor broom.

Minor stains or paint marks should be attended to as soon as they occur, and water-based substances may be removed with warm water. You can try a commercial dry-cleaning fluid in small, localized areas to remove stains, but caution should be used with any stain remover as it may affect the color of the fabric. Test a small, low visibility area first.



Major cleaning.

It is rare for drapes to need to be completely cleaned.

IFR synthetic fabrics can be dry cleaned by a commercial dry cleaner an unlimited number of times without affecting the inherent flame-retardant properties. Dry-cleaning fluids will leave your drapes somewhat noxious for a few days, so let them air out in an unoccupied theatre for a week before any rehearsal/performance.

You may water wash your curtains in a machine or tub however this may be impractical due to the size and weight. The chain in the base and all ties should be removed before washing. Use only synthetic detergents. Do not use soap, bleach, or softeners, which may adversely affect the fabric.

You may tumble dry at up to 60°C but remove immediately and hang. Excessive heat or leaving too long in an extractor or dryer will detract from the permanent-press characteristics of the polyester fabric. No ironing is required.

Repairs.

Check the curtain periodically for any tears or fraying especially in areas that are in contact with any other surface (e.g., proscenium edge or fire curtain wires). Any tears or fraying should be immediate repaired if possible.

AVOID GAFFER or MASKING TAPE – using tape on velvet or velveteen may result in the tape pulling out the fibres and creating a bald spot. Tape may also leave a sickly residue on the fabric. Temporary hand sewing or safety pinning a patch behind a tear is preferable for a short-term fix.

Following the suggestions above should help keep your drapes in top condition and maintain their beauty and usefulness for decades.