

Description

Technical Field

The present invention has relation to novel apparatus and process for laundering of textiles using small amounts of water and energy without substantial soil redeposition. This results in a superior level of detergency performance.

The present invention has further relation to novel apparatus and process for laundering of mixed textile loads comprised of dissimilar fiber and color types without substantial dye transfer from one textile to another.

Background Information

The conventional method of washing textiles in an automatic home-type washing machine in the United States is carried out in either a top loading or front loading machine. The difference between the two machines is that in a top loader the wash basket is rotatable around a substantially vertical axis and in a front loader the wash basket is rotatable around a substantially horizontal axis. Home-type top loading machines are, by far, the most popular, comprising 90% of the United States' automatic washing machine market.

The process for washing textiles in a home-type top loader begins by placing the textiles in the wash basket. In a normal capacity home-type top loader the wash basket can hold up to 7 kilograms of textiles. A detergent composition is then added to the wash basket. Finally, water, which is typically heated, is added to the wash basket to form a water and detergent solution known as the wash liquor. Thus, formation of the wash liquor is carried out in the wash basket in the presence of the textiles to be washed. The washing step is then completed by applying mechanical agitation to the system in order to loosen and remove the soil from the textiles.

The temperature and level of water and level of detergent composition used in the wash step can vary. 60% of the wash steps use warm water (typically around 35°C), with the balance being evenly split between hot water (typically around 50°C) and cold water (typically around 15°C). The level of water and detergent composition used in this step typically ranges from 40 liters to 90 liters and from 20 grams to 145 grams, respectively, depending upon the wash basket size and load size. The resulting detergent composition concentration in the wash liquor is from 210 parts per million (ppm) to 3,600 ppm.

The wash liquor is then removed and the textiles are rinsed. The rinse step normally comprises adding clear water to the wash basket. Mechanical agitation is normally applied during the rinse step to remove the detergent composition from the textiles. Finally, the water is drained and the textiles are spun to mechanically remove as much water as possible. A cold water rinse is used in 60% of the rinse steps, with the balance being warm water rinses. The amount of water used in this step is typically the same as that used in the wash step. The rinse step is generally repeated one or more times.

The wash cycle of the home-type front loader is very similar to that of the home-type top loader. The temperature of the water and detergent composition concentration used in the washing step are very similar to a home-type top loader. The basic difference is that the amount of water used in each of the wash and rinse steps typically ranges from 25 liters to 35 liters and, thus, the level of detergent composition is from 10 grams to 70 grams.

The complete conventional automatic wash process in a hometype top loader typically uses from 130 liters to 265 liters of water. By way of contrast, a home-type front loader, though more efficient, typically uses 95 liters of water. This too is a considerable water expenditure for one wash cycle. Also, if the water is heated there is a considerable energy expenditure. Both water and energy are costly to the consumer.

A known drawback normally exhibited by conventional automatic wash processes of the foregoing type is that soil redeposition occurs in both the wash and rinse steps. Soil redeposition is soil that is detached from the textiles and goes into the wash or rinse liquor and is then redeposited onto the textiles. Thus, soil redeposition substantially limits the "net" cleaning performance.

Another known drawback normally exhibited by conventional automatic wash processes of the foregoing type is that dye transfer can occur when dealing with loads of differently colored textiles. Dye transfer is the detachment of dye from a textile into the wash liquor and its subsequent deposition onto another textile. To avoid dye transfer the consumer has found it necessary to perform the additional step of presorting the textiles, not only by textile type but also by color type.

Hoesch GB A 2,051,883 discloses and claims a process for the washing of clothes through a wash and rinse cycle in a washing machine with a horizontal, perforated, driven tub arranged inside a housing wherein the tub has at its rotating periphery a tangential area, in which during the washing and rinsing cycle as the tub rotates, the clothes are repeatedly lifted up and then fall in a trajectory path onto the lower portion of the tub and are then distributed without unbalance to the tub, as the tub velocity is gradually increased. The clothes are then centrifuged as the velocity is increased further.

The claimed improvement comprises the steps of wetting the clothes with an amount of suds that gives a doughy consistency to the clothes by filling the tub with suds until the level of suds does not significantly rise above the tangential area of the tub by maintaining in the tub during washing an aqueous medium level of at least 5% of the tub's diameter, whereby the dry clothes are loaded individually into the tub which rotates at a speed at which the centrifugal force per unit mass at the tub case is 0.3—0.8 g. The

tub speed is then increased to give a centrifugal force per unit mass at the tub case of 1 g. then gradually changed to a spin speed and after the spinning, reduced to a velocity in keeping with the loading speed. The process is thereafter followed with a rinse cycle which is similar to the washing cycle. In the Hoesch apparatus, the exchange between "engaged" and "free" medium is achieved not so much by leaching but by the mechanical action of the tub. Finally, Hoesch teaches that water is saved for the most part not by using smaller ratios of total media, but by reducing the number of wash and rinse cycles.

Hoesch EP A 0 043 122 filed June 26 1981 and published June 6 1982 discloses a similar apparatus and method to that in GB A 2,051,883 with the additional optional feature of an axially mounted spray nozzle directed into the tub for wetting the textiles. The textiles are first wetted with wash liquor in an amount of from 45% to 100% of the absorption capacity of the textiles whilst being tumbled in the rotating tub and the speed of rotation during the washing process itself is then increased, spinning of the washed textiles to remove the wash liquor and suspended soil takes place at a still higher speed and the textiles are then rinsed with fresh water and spun again in a similar manner to the wash cycle.

U.S. Patent 4,118,189 issued to Reinwald et al on October 3, 1978 discloses a wash process which consists of transforming a concentrated wash liquor, by the introduction of compressed air, into a foam which is thereafter applied to the soiled textiles. The textiles are mechanically agitated in the foam for at least thirty seconds, then the foam is destroyed and removed from the textiles by spinning the textiles in a rotary perforated drum. This cycle is repeated at least five times, followed by conventional rinsing. Reinwald suggests that the dirt detached from the textile material and dispersed in a relatively highly concentrated detergent solution is partially deposited again on the textile fiber during the subsequent rinsing due to a dilution of the wash liquor.

Still another attempt at using more concentrated wash liquor without encountering redeposition problems of the type discussed in the aforementioned patent issued to Reinwald is disclosed in U.S. Patent 3,650,673 issued to Ehner on March 21, 1972. Ehner discloses method and apparatus for washing textiles utilizing an amount of water corresponding to from 50% to 150% of the dry weight of the textiles. The process consists of placing such quantities of water, the textiles to be laundered and a transfer agent, e.g., polyethylene foam having a large surface area per unit mass, in a rotatable enclosure similar to those employed in a front loader type washing machine and tumbling these materials together for a period of time. Soils removed from the textiles by the tumbling action are distributed over the combined exposed surface areas of the textiles and the transfer agent, which is subsequently separated from the textiles. Thus, the textiles are cleansed of the soils distributed onto the transfer agent. Ehner admits that a quantity of soil will be left on the textiles, but teaches that it will be substantially reduced from the original quantity and will be distributed so as to leave no objectionable areas of soil concentration. Following separation of the soil carrying transfer agent from the textiles, the textiles are subsequently dried in the same rotatable enclosure in which they are "washed" by tumbling them while circulating warm dry air therethrough.

U.S. Patent 3,647,354 issued to Loeb on March 7, 1972 suggests that a wash process such as that disclosed in the aforementioned Ehner patent be followed by a rinse process employing a quantity of water sufficient only to bring the textiles to a condition of dampness. According to Loeb, the textiles are tumbled in a rotating drum with a clean transfer agent which functions in a manner similar to the transfer agent used in the wash process to separate detergent and loosened soils from the textiles.

Marple US A 3,197,980 discloses a front-loading rotary drum automatic laundry apparatus having a superwash cycle in which the concentration of the detergent in the wash liquor is in the range 0.40-0.50% by weight. The process employs a greater volume of water than that necessary to wet the materials being washed and first wets the soiled materials with water before forming the super wash solution and exposing the materials to it. The super wash solution is then diluted with water to a normal wash concentration and a further wash cycle is carried out before the speed of rotation of the drum is increased and the wash liquor is removed by spinning. Rinse water is then applied and a spin rinse carried out. The apparatus employs a nozzle to direct part of the wash or rinse liquor into the rotatable drum, the remainder being fed via a product dispenser to the stationary tub forming the reservoir for the wash liquor.

Marshall US A 3,557,579 discloses an automatic washing machine designed to allow the use of relatively high detergent concentrations without the associated sudsing problems. An excess of water is employed relative to that necessary to wet the clothes, and this is fed to the vertically mounted inverted frusto conical wash chamber from a reservoir during the dissolution of detergent before the wash commences. During the wash stage the washing chamber is rotated at high speed so that clothes and wash water therein form an annular layer about the periphery of the chamber. Wash liquor is extracted centrifugally and recirculated by means of a flexible hose disposed axially in the washing chamber. After washing is completed the wash liquor is pumped away to the drain whilst centrifugal extraction from the chamber continues and rinse water is then introduced and a similar cycle followed.

Despite the advantages allegedly provided by wash processes of the foregoing type, they have not with widespread commercial acceptance, particularly in the home laundry market. There is therefore need for a process and apparatus to permit efficient use of low levels of concentrated wash liquor for domestic laundering purposes, with the associated reduction in the use of heat energy.

Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide apparatus and process for laundering textiles using a small amount of water, yet minimizing soil redeposition and dye transfer, even without presorting of the textiles to be laundered.

Another object of the present invention is to provide apparatus and process for laundering textiles which makes extremely efficient use of the detergent composition utilized and, if applied, extremely efficient use of heat energy.

Another object of the present invention is to provide preferred apparatus and process for laundering textiles using cold water.

A further object of the present invention is to provide apparatus and process for laundering textiles which results in superior cleaning as well as preservation of the textiles' appearance over many laundering cycles.

A still further object in a preferred aspect of the present invention is to provide apparatus and process for laundering textiles wherein mechanical energy can be applied to textiles which have been contacted with a concentrated wash liquor without creating a suds problem.

Disclosure of the Invention

According to one aspect of the invention there is provided a process for laundering a wash load of soiled textiles comprising the successive steps of:

- (a) producing a wash liquor comprising from 0.5% to 60% by weight of detergent composition;
- (b) distributing substantially evenly and completely onto the entire wash load of said soiled textiles in their substantially dry state a quantity of said wash liquor applied in a finely divided form, said quantity lying in the range from just enough to distribute said wash liquor substantially evenly and completely onto said textiles to 5.0 times the dry weight of said textiles, said wash liquor containing from 5 grams to 200 grams of said detergent composition per kilogram of said textiles, said textiles being subjected to mechanical energy by being tumbled while said wash liquor is being distributed thereon;
- (c) allowing said quantity of wash liquor to remain in contact with said textiles for a period of time during which, if there is more than a minimal amount of free liquor in excess of the absorption capacity of said textiles, limited mechanical energy is applied to said textiles at a rate not exceeding that employed during distribution of the wash liquor so as to prevent oversudsing;
- (d) after steps a) b) and c) have been completed, rinsing said textiles with a quantity of an aqueous liquid rinse liquor sufficient to produce enough free water on the surface of said textiles to adequately suspend the soil and the detergent composition; and
- (e) after step (d) has been completed, separating said rinse liquor containing said wash liquor and said soil from said textiles.

According to another aspect of the invention a laundering apparatus suitable for carrying out the above process comprises a drum rotatable about a horizontal axis and containing a plurality of lifting vanes, said drum being adapted to retain the soiled textiles during laundering, means for producing an aqueous wash liquor, means for applying all of said wash liquor in finely divided form on to said soiled textiles, means for applying rinsing water to said washed textiles, said rotatable drum being moisture-pervious and being mounted within a moisture-impervious stationary chamber, said stationary chamber including means for simultaneously removing said concentrated wash liquor, said soils and said rinse liquor from said moisture-pervious drum; and said moisture-pervious drum being connected to a drive motor adapted to impart mechanical energy to the laundered textiles, wherein the means for applying the wash liquor comprises spraying means and wherein the drum is provided with speed control means adapted to rotate the drum, during application of the wash liquor, at a speed less than that sufficient to overcome gravitational forces acting on the soiled textiles, to lift the textiles to a height within the drum such that the textiles can fall under gravity in front of the spray means.

Brief Description of the Drawings

While the Specification concludes with claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the present invention, it is believed the present invention will be better understood from the following description in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic perspective illustration of particularly preferred apparatus for carrying out the present laundering process;

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional illustration of the embodiment disclosed in Figure 1 taken along section line 2—2 of Figure 1;

Figure 2A is an inset of the drive pulley system shown in Figure 2 with the pulley-actuating clutch assembly in its alternative position;

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional segment of the apparatus illustrated in Figure 1 taken in a plane which passes through the center of the wash liquor applicator nozzle and the axis of rotation of the movable drum disclosed in Figure 1;

Figure 4 is a simplified cross-sectional illustration of a particularly preferred wash liquor applicator nozzle; and

Figure 5 is an end view of the wash liquor applicator nozzle shown in Figure 4.

Detailed Description of the Invention

A. PREFERRED APPARATUS

Disclosed in Figure 1 is a schematic illustration of particularly preferred apparatus for carrying out a laundering process in accordance with the present invention. Figure 1 discloses a preferred embodiment of a washing machine 10 of the present invention. The apparatus in Figure 1 is particularly preferred when the quantity of wash liquor utilized is, at most, $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the dry weight of the textiles to be laundered. Such maximum quantity of wash liquor approaches the maximum absorption capacity of an average wash load. For purposes of clarity none of the details of the cabinet nor the access door is shown in Figure 1.

In the embodiment of Figure 1, the washing machine 10 comprises a stationary drum 15 of generally cylindrical construction and having a horizontal access opening 20. The centerline of the cylindrical stationary drum 15 coincides with the axis of rotation 300 of a movable drum 40 (sometimes referred to in the prior art as a wash basket) mounted within stationary drum 15.

As is more clearly illustrated in the cross-sectional views of Figures 2 and 3, stationary drum 15 comprises a peripheral wall 16, a back wall 17 secured to one edge of the peripheral wall, a front wall 18 secured to the opposite edge of the peripheral wall, said front wall having a tubular-shaped extension 19 having an access opening 20 used to load and unload laundry from the washing machine 10. Access opening 20 forms a seal with pliable sealing gasket 210 which is secured about its outermost periphery to the front wall 200 of the washing machine cabinet. When the washing machine 10 is in operation, the washing machine's access door 220 is in the closed position shown in Figure 2 and forms a watertight seal against the outermost portion of pliable sealing gasket 210. These latter elements are illustrated only in the cross-section of Figure 2 to ensure maximum clarity in the remaining drawing figures. The lowermost portion of stationary drum 15 is provided with a drain connection 21 located in peripheral wall 16. The drain connection 21 is connected by means of a flexible connecting line 142 to the suction side of a rinse liquor discharge pump 140 which is secured by means of support 141 to the base of the washing machine cabinet (not shown). Connecting line 143 conveys rinse liquor discharged from the pump 140 to a sewer drain (not shown).

As can also be seen in Figures 1 and 2, stationary drum 15 is supported by means of four suspension springs 66 which are connected at one end to anchor means 65 secured to the uppermost portion of the stationary drum 15 and at their other end to fixed anchor means 67 which are secured to the washing machine cabinet (not shown).

Extending from the lowermost portion of peripheral wall 16 are four support members 70, the lowermost ends of which are secured to motion limiting damper pads 71. A vertical guide plate 72 passes between the two sets of motion limiting damper pads 71. Sufficient clearance is provided between the motion limiting damper pads 71 and the guide plate 72, which is secured to the base of the washing machine cabinet (not shown), so that the stationary drum 15 may undergo limited up-and-down and side-to-side movement while access opening 20 and tubular extension 19 remain in sealed engagement with pliable sealing gasket 210. The resilient mounting of stationary drum 15 minimizes the transmission of vibration which occurs during moments of imbalanced loading to the washing machine cabinet (not shown).

Located inside stationary drum 15 is a movable drum 40 comprising a perforated peripheral wall 41, a substantially imperforate back wall 42 secured to one edge of said peripheral wall and a substantially imperforate front wall 43 secured to the opposite edge thereof. Extending from the front wall 43 of the movable drum 40 is a tubular-shaped extension 44 which terminates in an access opening 45 which is concentrically aligned with the access opening 20 in stationary drum 15. Equally spaced on the inner circumference of peripheral wall 41 are three lifting vanes 47 of substantially triangular cross-section. The innermost edge of the side walls 48 of the triangular-shaped vanes 47 preferably terminate to form an innermost land area 49. In a particularly preferred embodiment, each of the vanes is symmetrically-shaped about a radially extending line originating at the axis of rotation 300 of movable drum 40 and passing through its altitude. This permits rotation of movable drum 40 in opposite directions with equal lifting effect on the articles being laundered.

In an exemplary embodiment of a washing machine 10 of the present invention, the movable drum 40 measured approximately $21\frac{1}{2}$ " (54.6 cm.) in diameter by approximately 12" (30.5 cm.) in depth, while the triangular-shaped lifting vanes 47 exhibited a base of approximately 2" (5.1 cm.) in width by 9" (22.9 cm.) in depth, an overall altitude of approximately 3" (7.6 cm.) and a land area 49 measuring approximately 1" (2.5 cm.) in width by 7" (17.8 cm.) in depth. The inner movable drum 40 exhibited approximately 750 uniformly spaced perforations 46, each perforation having a diameter of approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ " (0.635 cm.). The stationary drum 15 enclosing the aforementioned movable drum 40 measured approximately 24" (61 cm.) in diameter.

As will be apparent from an inspection of Figure 2, movable drum 40 is rotatably secured to stationary drum 15 by means of driveshaft 29. The innermost end of driveshaft 29 incorporates an integral flange 30 which is secured by means of companion flange 31 and a multiplicity of fasteners, such as rivets 32, to the back wall 42 of movable drum 40. The shaft portion of driveshaft 29 passes through a clearance hole 51 in the back wall 42 of movable drum 40 and is supported by means of a pair of bearings 25 secured to the back wall 17 of stationary drum 15. Bearings 25 are secured in position by means of bearing retainers 22 which are joined to one another and to the back wall 17 by a multiplicity of conventional fasteners, such as rivets

33. The shaft portion of driveshaft 29 passes through a clearance hole 26 in back wall 17 of stationary drum 15.

Power to rotate movable drum 40 is transmitted to the external portion of driveshaft 29 either by means of an eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28 or by means of a concentrically mounted driven pulley 34 which are both secured in fixed relation to driveshaft 29. As will be explained in greater detail hereinafter, the eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28 is used to vary the speed of rotation of the movable drum 40 throughout each revolution of the drum, while the concentrically mounted driven pulley 34 is used to drive the movable drum 40 at a constant speed of rotation throughout each revolution.

The drive system for the movable drum 40 preferably comprises a variable speed drive motor 60 secured by means of support 61 to the peripheral wall 16 of stationary drum 15. Because the drive motor 60 is secured to the stationary drum 15, any movement of the stationary drum 15 does not affect the speed of rotation of movable drum 40. The output shaft 62 of drive motor 60 has secured thereto a concentrically mounted drive pulley 38 and a concentrically mounted drive pulley 36. A two-position, pulley-actuating clutch assembly 37 is positioned intermediate pulleys 36 and 38. Drive pulleys 36 and 38 are both of two-piece construction so as to permit engagement or disengagement of their respective drive belts by pulley-actuating clutch assembly 37. The housing of clutch assembly 37 through which drive motor shaft 62 freely passes is preferably secured to the housing of drive motor 60 by means of a laterally extending support 63, as generally shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Concentrically mounted drive pulley 38 is connected to eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28 by means of a conventional drive belt 27. Likewise, concentrically mounted drive pulley 36 is connected to concentrically mounted drive pulley 34 by means of a conventional drive belt 35. When clutch assembly 37 is in its first position, the distance between the opposing faces of drive pulley 36 is sufficiently great that drive belt 35 is allowed to freely slip therebetween when driveshaft 29 revolves. When clutch assembly 37 is actuated into its second position, the opposing faces of drive pulley 36 are brought sufficiently close together that drive belt 35 is driven by pulley 36. Simultaneously, the distance between the opposing faces of drive pulley 38 is increased to a distance which is sufficiently great that drive belt 27 is allowed to freely slip therebetween when driveshaft 29 revolves. Figure 2 depicts drive pulley 36 in the engaged position, while the inset of Figure 2A depicts drive pulley 38 in the engaged position.

In a particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention, drive motor 60 is not only variable speed, but is also reversible so that movable drum 40 may be rotated first in one direction and then in the opposite direction throughout the various portions of the laundering cycle. It is believed that reversing the direction of drum rotation several times during the laundering cycle will provide more uniform application of the wash liquor, more uniform agitation and more uniform heat transfer to the textiles being laundered, and hence more effective cleansing.

In the exemplary washing machine embodiment described earlier herein, the eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28 was used to provide rotation of the movable drum 40 at a speed which varied from 48 to 58 revolutions per minute during each complete revolution of the drum, while the concentrically mounted pulley system comprising pulleys 36 and 34 was used to provide rotation of the movable drum at a constant speed of about 544 revolutions per minute.

Referring again to the particularly preferred embodiment of Figure 1, there is shown an air circulating blower 160, preferably of the centrifugal variety, secured by means of a support 162 to an upper portion of peripheral wall 16 of the stationary drum 15. The air circulating blower 160 is preferably powered by variable speed drive motor 161. A connecting duct 163 conveys air from the blower discharge to a heater 164. The heater 164 includes a heating element 165 over which the air must pass prior to entering connecting duct 166 which conveys heated air from the heater 164 to an inlet opening 180 located in the peripheral wall 16 of the stationary drum 15. In the embodiment disclosed in Figures 1—3, heated air is introduced intermediate the peripheral wall 16 of stationary drum 15 and the peripheral wall 41 of movable drum 40. The bulk of the heated air introduced in this area is forced to enter movable drum 40 via perforations 46 located in peripheral wall 41. As pointed out earlier herein, the movable drum 40 is caused to rotate at varying speeds during the laundering portion of the cycle via the eccentrically mounted pulley 28. Since the articles being laundered are normally located at or adjacent the innermost surface of peripheral wall 41 of movable drum 40 during the laundering cycle, the heated air introduced between the stationary and movable drums is caused to penetrate the textiles being laundered on its way to return opening 190 located in tubular extension 19 of stationary drum 15.

Return opening 190 is connected to a diverter valve 168 by means of connecting duct 167. Diverter valve 168 has two positions. In its first position, connecting ducts 170 and 171 are blocked off and all of the humid air withdrawn from stationary drum 15 is returned to the suction side of air circulating blower 160 via connecting duct 172. As will be explained in greater detail in the ensuing preferred process description, diverter valve 168 remains in its first position during the laundering portion of the cycle described herein. The temperature of the returning air is sensed in connecting duct 167 by means of a sensing element 173 mounted in the duct. The sensing element 173, which is preferably of the thermistor type, sends a signal to temperature controller 175 via signal transmission line 174. The temperature controller 175, which is preferably adjustable, transmits a signal via signal transmission line 176 to the heating element 165 in heater 164 to either raise, lower or maintain the temperature of the air being introduced into connecting duct 166. Thus, the heated air employed during the laundering portion of the cycle is continually

recirculated by means of the aforementioned closed loop system, and its temperature is continuously monitored and maintained at a predetermined level.

In a particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention, the washing machine 10 may also be employed as a clothes dryer. This is accomplished by manipulation of diverter valve 168. Advancing control lever 169 from the aforementioned first position of the diverter valve to a second position connects air duct 171 with return air duct 172 and air duct 170 with return air duct 167. Since air ducts 170 and 171 are both vented to atmosphere, the effect of advancing the diverter valve 168 to its second position is to convert the closed loop recirculation system described earlier herein in conjunction with the laundering cycle to a non-recirculating vented system. In the vented mode of operation, fresh air is drawn into duct 171 and routed through the heater as before to provide warm dry air for drying the laundered textiles contained within movable drum 40. Similarly, the moist air withdrawn from stationary drum 15 is discharged to the atmosphere via connecting duct 170 rather than being recirculated to the suction side of the air circulating blower 160. During the drying portion of the cycle, movable drum 40 is rotated, as during the laundering cycle, by drive motor 60 operating through the eccentrically mounted pulley and drive belt system described earlier herein. The temperature of the air used during the drying cycle is also monitored and controlled by sensing element 173 and temperature controller 175. However, the temperature selected during the drying cycle may differ from that employed during the laundering cycle. Accordingly, the temperature controller 175 preferably has two independently adjustable set points which may be preadjusted to different temperature levels for the laundering and drying cycles.

As will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, diverter valve control lever 169 may be automatically actuated rather than manually actuated, as disclosed in the present illustrations. This may be accomplished utilizing solenoids or similar control apparatus well known in the art and therefore not shown.

In the exemplary washing machine embodiment described earlier herein, the air circulating blower 160 utilized to recirculate the humid air during the laundering portion of the cycle had a rated capacity of 460 cubic feet (13.03 cubic meters) of air per minute at a pressure of 0.25" (0.635 cm.) of water, and the connecting ducts used to construct the recirculation loop were sized to permit recirculation of the air at rated flow. The heater 164 employed on the exemplary machine contained a heating element 165 comprising a 240 volt AC, 5200 watt, spiral wound, nichrome coil. The temperature sensing element 173 comprised a thermistor inserted into return air duct 167. Temperature controller 175 comprised a 0-200°F (-17.8 - 93.3°C) adjustable unit having a set point accuracy of 3% of range and a set point stability of 2% of span from the nominal setting. A high limit snap disc-type thermostat (not shown) having a range of 400-450°F (204.4 - 232.2°C) was also utilized to protect the system.

Referring again to Figures 1-3, preferred wash liquor and rinse liquor addition systems are disclosed. In particular, the wash liquor utilized during the laundering portion of the cycle is prepared in wash liquor reservoir 89 which is schematically illustrated in Figure 1. In a particularly preferred form of the present invention, the cycle is initiated by introducing a predetermined amount of detergent composition, which may be in granular, paste, gel or liquid in form, into the wash liquor reservoir 89. Water from supply line 80 passes through pressure regulator 81, connecting line 101 and control valves 82, 84 and 87, which are in the open position, into the side of wash liquor reservoir 89 via connecting lines 96, 94 and 99. Control valves 85 and 88 are closed at this point in time to prevent the water from escaping via delivery lines 95 and 98. Located within wash liquor reservoir 89 is a level sensing probe 92 which is connected at its uppermost end to a level sensor 91. The level of the liquid introduced into the wash liquor reservoir rises along probe 92. When the liquid level within reservoir 89 reaches a predetermined point, level sensor 91 transmits a signal to level controller 93 via signal transmission line 105. Level controller 93 sends a signal via signal transmission line 106 to close off control valve 82. After control valve 82 has been closed, pump 86 is started to initiate recirculation, mixing and formation of a wash liquor within reservoir 89. Control valves 85 and 88 remain closed during the mixing cycle. Pump 86 withdraws liquid from the bottom of wash liquor reservoir 89 via connecting lines 99 and 97 and discharges the liquid withdrawn back into the reservoir via connecting lines 94 and 96. Recirculation of the liquid is carried out until such time as the detergent composition is substantially dissolved or dispersed in the water. The time required will of course vary, depending upon such variables as the solubility characteristics of the particular detergent composition employed, the concentration of detergent composition, the temperature of the incoming water and like. To minimize the mixing time, it is generally preferred to design the liquid recirculation loop to maximize the turbulence of flow during recirculation.

As will be explained in greater detail in conjunction with the ensuing preferred process description, the present laundering process may be carried out without the addition of heat energy via heating element 165. However, experience to date has demonstrated that it is generally preferable that wash liquor and rinse liquor temperatures be in the range of 25°C. or higher to maximize the benefits afforded by the present process. To achieve this objective when the heat energy addition option is not employed during the laundering cycle, a water preheating unit (not shown) may be utilized on the incoming water supply line to ensure that the temperature of the incoming water does not fall below 25°C, even during cold weather conditions.

As pointed out earlier herein, a relatively small amount of wash liquor is utilized during the present laundering process when compared to prior art laundering processes. Accordingly, the method of applying

the wash liquor to the textiles to be laundered must be highly effective in order to provide substantially even and complete distribution, especially when very reduced quantities of wash liquor are utilized. One particularly preferred means of accomplishing this objective has been to apply the wash liquor by means of a high pressure spray nozzle 100 as the movable drum 40 rotates. During the wash liquor application step control valves 82 and 88 are closed and control valves 84, 85 and 87 are opened. Wash liquor 230 is withdrawn from reservoir 89 by means of pump 86 and is conveyed via flexible delivery line 95 to high pressure spray nozzle 100 which, in the illustrated embodiment, is mounted in the tubular-shaped extension 19 of stationary drum 15. A small amount of wash liquor is also permitted to flow through valve 84 and delivery line 96 back into reservoir 89 to provide some recirculation and mixing during the wash liquor application cycle. As can be seen from Figure 3, which is a simplified diametral cross-section taken through spray nozzle 100 and the axis of rotation 300 of movable drum 40, high pressure nozzle 100 is located at approximately the 8 o'clock position and a substantially flat, fan-shaped spray of wash liquor 230 is targeted to strike peripheral wall 41 and back wall 42 of the movable drum 40 which, in the illustrated embodiment, is rotating in a counterclockwise orientation, at approximately the 2 o'clock position.

In order to distribute the textiles to be laundered substantially uniformly about the periphery of the movable drum 40, the textiles are initially tumbled at low speed via eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28. Movable drum 40 is thereafter accelerated by concentrically mounted driven pulley 36 to a speed which is sufficient to hold the substantially uniformly distributed articles against peripheral wall 41. The wash liquor application step is initiated while the articles are held against peripheral wall 41. However, after several revolutions of movable drum 40, the speed of drum rotation is reduced by transferring the input driving force from concentrically mounted driven pulley 36 back to eccentrically mounted driven pulley 38. The slower speed of rotation, which varies throughout each revolution of movable drum 40, causes the textiles within the drum to be carried by lifting vanes 47 to approximately the 1 o'clock position, at which point they tend to fall away from peripheral wall 41 and pass through the substantially flat, fan-shaped spray of wash liquor 230 on their return to the bottom of the drum.

While in the illustrated embodiment, the drum rotation is oriented in a counterclockwise direction, it has also been learned that the drum may, if desired, be rotated in a clockwise direction. In the latter case the textiles which fall away from the peripheral wall 41 at approximately the 11 o'clock position still pass through the fan-shaped spray of wash liquor 230 on their return to the bottom of the drum.

The wash liquor application step is carried out until all or a predetermined amount of the wash liquor contained in reservoir 89 has been applied to the textiles being laundered. The quantity of wash liquor applied for a given laundering cycle will vary, depending upon such factors as the quantity of textiles being laundered, their materials of construction, and the soil type and level of soil loading, as more fully described in the accompanying detailed process description. When the wash liquor application step has been completed, even with the smallest quantities of wash liquor within the invention, the wash liquor is substantially evenly and completely distributed onto the textiles being subjected to the present laundering process.

To further enhance distribution, wash liquor application may be carried out in several stages, with the movable drum 40 being momentarily stopped and restarted between each stage to allow the articles to completely redistribute themselves prior to each stage of wash liquor application. Similarly, multiple spray nozzles may be employed.

Figures 4 and 5 disclose the internal configuration of the spray nozzle 100 employed in the exemplary washing machine embodiment described earlier herein. In particular, an irregularly-shaped orifice 400 is formed by intersection of a V-shaped groove 410 having an included angle α of approximately 45° extending across the nozzle's face 430 and a cylindrical passageway 420 passing through its longitudinal axis. A cross-sectional view of this exemplary nozzle 100 is generally disclosed in Figure 4, and an end view taken along view line 5-5 is shown in Figure 5. The maximum width W of the aforementioned groove 410 was approximately 0.075" (0.19 cm.), as measured at the face 430 of the nozzle. The diameter D_2 of the nozzle face 430 was approximately 0.40" (1.02 cm.). The diameter D_1 of passageway 420 was approximately 0.125" (0.32 cm.) along its length, converging at an included angle β of approximately 120° adjacent the nozzle face 430. Intersection of groove 410 and passageway 420 produced the irregularly, shaped orifice 400 generally shown in Figure 5. Wash liquor was fed by means of a pump 86 having a rated capacity of 500 gallons (1892.5 litres) per hour at 7 psi (48.3 kPa) connected to nozzle 100 via a $\frac{1}{2}$ " (0.635 cm.) diameter flexible delivery line 95. The nozzle 100 was installed in tubular shaped extension 19 at approximately the 8 o'clock position with its spray oriented so as to strike peripheral wall 41 and back wall 42 of movable drum 40, as generally shown in Figure 3. Drum rotation was oriented clockwise when viewed from its front wall side.

While spraying has been found to be a particularly preferred method of wash liquor application, other application means, e.g., atomizers, which will produce a similar distribution of wash liquor throughout the textiles to be laundered, as described in the accompanying detailed process description, may be employed with equal success.

After the wash liquor application has been completed, preferably mechanical energy is applied to the textiles by rotating movable drum 40 at relatively low speed such that the textiles being laundered are continually lifted by vanes 47 secured within the movable drum and caused to mechanically tumble back toward the bottom of the drum. As pointed out earlier herein, the tumbling action is accentuated by varying

the speed of rotation of the movable drum 40 throughout each revolution of the drum. This is accomplished in the machine embodiment disclosed in Figure 1 by driving the movable drum 40 via eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28. In a particularly preferred embodiment of the invention, the direction of rotation of movable drum 40 is reversed several times throughout the laundering cycle. This provides more thorough mechanical agitation of the textiles being laundered and, hence, more uniform heat transfer throughout the textiles. In addition, it minimizes the tendency of textiles, particularly long and thin appendages on textiles, e.g., sleeves on shirts, from becoming knotted up.

Heat energy is preferably supplied to the textiles being laundered during the aforementioned mechanical agitation process. In the machine embodiment disclosed in Figure 1 this is accomplished by recirculating moist humid air through heater 164 using air handling blower 160. Preferred air temperature ranges and cycle times are specified in the accompanying detailed process description.

Following the mechanical and/or heat energy application phase of the present laundering process, the textiles contained within the movable drum 40 are rinsed with an aqueous rinse liquor 240, which in a particularly preferred embodiment comprises water. This is supplied from water supply line 80 via control valve 83 which is opened to permit delivery of rinse water to movable drum 40 via flexible delivery line 110 and applicator nozzle 120. Applicator nozzle 120 is also preferably mounted in the tubular shaped extension 19 of stationary drum 15. Applicator nozzle 120 need not, however, be a high pressure spray nozzle such as that utilized to apply wash liquor. Because free standing liquor is employed in movable drum 40 during the rinse portion of the present laundering cycle, it is believed that the particular manner of applying the rinse liquor to the laundered textiles is much less critical than the manner of applying the wash liquor. Accordingly, the rinse liquor may be added by any of several means well known in the art, e.g., directly into stationary drum 15 via an orifice in peripheral wall 16.

The textiles being laundered are preferably subjected to mechanical agitation during both the rinse liquor addition and the rinse cycles. This is preferably done by rotating movable drum 40 at relatively low speed via eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28. As with the mechanical energy and heat energy application phase of the laundering cycle, the direction of rotation of movable drum 40 is preferably changed several times during the rinse cycle to ensure more uniform rinsing.

In a particularly preferred embodiment, several relatively short rinse cycles are employed to remove the loosened soil and detergent from the textiles being laundered.

It is believed preferable to remove the rinse water from movable drum 40 during the initial rinse cycles without resorting to high speed centrifugation, i.e., high speed rotation of movable drum 40. While not wishing to be bound it is believed that avoidance of centrifugation during the early rinse cycles minimizes the chance of redepositing suspended soils onto the textiles being laundered, since the rinse liquor is not forced through the textiles being laundered on its way to the perforations 46 in peripheral wall 41 of movable drum 40. Accordingly, centrifugation to remove as much moisture as possible from the laundered and rinsed textiles is preferably deferred until the last rinse cycle. As will be clear from an inspection of Figures 1 and 2, rinse water which is removed from movable drum 40 either by gravity or by centrifugation is ultimately removed from stationary drum 15 through drain connection 21 by means of discharge pump 140 from whence it is preferably conveyed to the sewer.

If desired, laundry additives of various types, e.g., fabric softeners, may be employed in conjunction with the laundering process described herein. If desired, such additives may be applied to the articles being laundered by conventional gravity addition (not shown) or via pressure spray nozzle 100. In the latter instance, one or more secondary reservoirs 90 may be employed. The discharge of these secondary reservoirs may be connected, as by delivery line 98 and control valve 88, to the wash liquor mixing system.

Depending upon the nature of the additive, it may be desirable to flush the wash liquor reservoir 89 with water prior to introducing the additive into the reservoir. This may be done by refilling the reservoir with water and recirculating the solution via pump 86 prior to discharging it into one of the rinse cycles. After wash liquor reservoir 89 has been flushed, control valve 88 may be opened to permit delivery of an additive from reservoir 90 to the wash liquor reservoir via pump 86. When a predetermined quantity of the additive has been transferred to wash liquor and reservoir 89, a water dilution cycle may, if desired, be carried out in a manner similar to that employed for mixing the wash liquor, i.e., water from the supply line is added to reservoir 89, control valves 82, 85 and 88 are closed, and the additive solution is recirculated via pump 86 to the wash liquor reservoir 89 until such time as the additive is ready for application to the articles being laundered. Application of the mixed additive solution may thereafter be carried out during one or more of the rinse cycles employed in the present process in a manner generally similar to that employed for the application of the wash liquor.

Following centrifugation by high speed rotation of movable drum 40 to mechanically remove as much rinse liquor as is feasible, the washing machine 10 may be operated as a conventional clothes drying apparatus by actuating diverter valve 168 from its first position to its second position. In its second position, diverter valve 168 permits fresh air to be drawn into connecting duct 171 via suction from blower 160, heated to a predetermined temperature by heater 164, circulated through the laundered and rinsed textiles contained in rotating drum 40 and vented from stationary drum 15 to the atmosphere via connecting duct 170. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, movable drum 40 is preferably operated at low speed via eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28 throughout the drying cycle to provide more uniform air flow and heat transfer through the laundered and rinsed textiles contained therein.

PREFERRED PROCESS

Another aspect of this invention comprises a process for laundering textiles, hereinafter referred to as the "concentrated laundering process". The process utilizes quantities of an aqueous liquid wash liquor in the wash step ranging from, at least, just enough to be substantially evenly and completely distributed onto all portions of the textiles to, at most, 5 times the dry weight of the textiles to be laundered. The quantities of wash liquor are applied to the textiles during the wash step. It is essential that the wash liquor be substantially evenly and completely distributed onto the textiles. In the final step or steps of the process the textiles are rinsed with water to remove both the soil and detergent composition.

The quantities of wash liquor that can be used in the wash step range from, at least, just enough to be substantially evenly and completely distributed onto all portions of the textiles to, at most, 5 times the dry weight of the textiles to be laundered. The quantities of wash liquor in the range of the lower limit approach what is equivalent to directly applying a conventional level of a typical commercially available heavy duty liquid detergent composition to the textiles. Surprisingly, the addition of more wash liquor, i.e., adding both water and detergent composition to the wash liquor such that the wash liquor concentration remains constant, so that the upper limit is exceeded results in essentially no additional soil removal and no less soil redeposition. It should be noted that depending on the nature of the textiles, soil types, soil levels, detergent composition levels and detergent composition formulations that the upper limit can vary slightly. When quantities of wash liquor exceeding the absorption capacity of the textiles are utilized, only limited amounts of mechanical energy should be applied to the textiles during the wash step in order to prevent oversudsing. But, surprisingly, a good level of cleaning performance is achieved nonetheless. Also, with quantities of wash liquor exceeding the absorption capacity of the textiles, though possible, it is not essential that the preferred apparatus be utilized.

MORE PREFERRED QUANTITIES OF WASH LIQUOR

Therefore, in a more preferred embodiment the quantity of wash liquor that can be used in the wash step ranges from about just enough to be substantially evenly and completely distributed onto all portions of the textiles to, at most, none or minimal amounts of wash liquor in excess of the absorption capacity of the textiles. With such quantities there is at most minimal amounts of "free" wash liquor. Thus, essentially all of the wash liquor and, therefore, essentially all of the detergent composition contained in the wash liquor, will be in intimate contact with the textiles throughout the wash step. This permits the application of a substantial amount of mechanical agitation to the textiles during the wash step, as discussed below, without any oversudsing.

Surprisingly, numerous other benefits are obtained when the quantities of wash liquor of this more preferred embodiment are utilized. For example, since essentially all of the detergent composition is in intimate contact with the textiles, the detergent composition is being utilized extremely efficiently. Also, there is essentially no wash liquor for the dye of the textiles to be released into and subsequently deposited onto another textile. Thus, dye transfer during the wash step is minimized and, therefore, it is generally not necessary for the consumer to presort the textiles. This is particularly significant if the laundry load contains the type of textile commonly known as a dye bleeder, i.e., one that contains excessive amounts of highly soluble dyes. Another benefit is that the addition of more wash liquor, i.e., adding both water and detergent composition to the wash liquor such that the wash liquor concentration remains constant, to approach the upper limit of 5 times the dry weight of the textiles to be laundered provides minimal additional soil removal in view of the cost of the additional detergent composition utilized.

In a more preferred embodiment, the quantity of wash liquor that can be used in the wash step is from just enough to be substantially evenly and completely distributed onto the textiles to $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the dry weight of the textiles and preferably from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the dry weight of the textiles. These ranges provide the most efficient use of a detergent composition. That is to say, in these ranges, for a given quantity of detergent composition, there is the most soil removal and least soil redeposition. Surprisingly, the addition of more water to the wash liquor, i.e., diluting the wash liquor, so as to exceed this upper limit, results in less soil removal from the textiles and more soil redeposition. Also, with this preferred limit, contact dyeing is minimized. Contact dyeing is the transfer of dye from the surface of one textile directly to that of another. These preferred ranges can also vary depending on the nature of the textiles, soil types, soil levels, detergent composition levels and detergent composition formulations.

THE WASH LIQUOR

The wash liquor contains from 40% to 99.5%, preferably from 85% to 99.5% and most preferably from 95% to 98.7% of water and from 5,000 ppm to 600,000 ppm, preferably from 5,000 ppm to 150,000 ppm and most preferably from 13,000 ppm to 50,000 ppm of a detergent composition. Wash liquor concentrations of detergent composition below 5,000 ppm result in substantially less soil removal from the textiles and above 600,000 ppm do not provide sufficient additional benefit to justify the addition of more detergent composition. However, in absolute terms, the wash liquor should contain from 5 to 200 grams of detergent composition per kilogram of wash load. As utilized herein the wash load refers to the dry weight of the textiles, unless otherwise specified. Preferably, the absolute amount of detergent composition in the wash liquor is from 10 grams to 60 grams per kilogram of wash load. However, the most preferable detergent composition levels are heavily dependent on the detergent composition formulation. It should be noted

that the wash liquor of the present invention is much more concentrated than the wash liquor utilized in the conventional automatic home-type top loader washing machines, although similar quantities of detergent composition are used.

The detergent composition can contain all of the standard ingredients of detergent compositions, i.e., detergent surfactants and detergency builders. Suitable ingredients include those set forth in U.S. Patents 3,936,537, Baskerville et al, February 3, 1976; 3,664,961, Norris, May 23, 1972; 3,919,678, Laughlin et al, December 30, 1975; 4,222,905, Cockrell, September 16, 1980; and 4,239,659, Murphy, December 16, 1980.

The wash liquor should preferably contain from 400 ppm to 150,000 ppm, more preferably from 1,500 ppm to 10,000 ppm of detergent surfactant and, in absolute terms, preferably from 1 gram to 45 grams per kilogram of wash load. The wash liquor should also contain preferably from 0 ppm to 100,000 ppm, more preferably from 1,000 ppm to 50,000 ppm of a detergency builder and, in absolute terms, preferably from 10 grams to 50 grams per kilogram of washload. It should be noted that another benefit of the concentrated laundering process is that, due to the small quantities of water utilized, water hardness control is not as critical as in a conventional wash process. Suitable detergent surfactants and detergency builders for use herein are disclosed in the U.S. patents cited immediately hereinbefore. The wash liquor can also contain inorganic salts other than detergency builders, enzymes and bleaches. The level of inorganic salts in the wash liquor is from 0 ppm to 150,000 ppm and preferably from 1,500 ppm to 50,000 ppm. The preferred enzymes for use herein are selected from proteases, amylases and mixtures thereof. The level of enzymes present in the wash liquor is from 0 ppm to 3,000 ppm, preferably from 0 ppm to 1,500 ppm. The level of proteases present in the wash liquor is from 0 Anson Units per liter (A.U./L.) to 1.0 A.U./L, and preferably from 0.03 A.U./L. to 0.7 A.U./L. The level of amylases present in the wash liquor is from 0 Amylase Units/liter of wash liquor to 26,000 Amylase Units/liter of wash liquor and preferably from 200 Amylase Units/liter of wash liquor to 13,000 Amylase Units/liter of wash liquor wherein Amylase Units are as defined in U.K. Patent 1,275,301 Desforges (Published May 24, 1972). Bleach levels in the wash liquor are from 0 ppm to 6,000 ppm and preferably from 500 ppm to 2,000 ppm. Also, bleach levels in the wash liquor are from 0 ppm to 2,000 ppm, preferably from 20 ppm to 1,000 ppm and most preferably from 50 ppm to 750 ppm of available chlorine when a chlorine bleach is utilized and from 0 ppm to 1,500 ppm, preferably from 50 ppm to 750 ppm and most preferably from 100 ppm to 500 ppm when an oxygen bleach is utilized.

Other parameters of the wash liquor are pH, viscosity, oil/water interfacial tension and particle size. The pH range for the wash liquor is from 5 to 12, preferably from 7 to 10.5 and most preferably from 9 to 10.5. It has been generally observed that superior cleaning can be achieved in the concentrated laundering process without the use of highly alkaline detergent compositions. The viscosity of the wash liquor can range preferably from about the viscosity of water to 250 centipoise (9.25 Pa-s) and more preferably from the viscosity of water to 50 centipoise (0.05 Pa-s). Also, it is preferred that the oil/water interfacial tension is no greater than 10 dynes and more preferably no greater than 5 dynes and preferably that no solid ingredient is larger than 50 microns and more preferably no larger than 10 microns. Typically, the quantity of wash liquor utilized in the concentrated laundering process when utilized for home-type laundry loads will range from 1 liter to 20 liters and preferably from 2 liters to 5 liters.

The detergent compositions utilized in the concentrated laundering process can be in any form, such as granules, pastes, gels or liquids. However, based upon ease of preparation of the wash liquor, liquid detergent compositions and rapidly dissolving granular detergent compositions are desirable.

The conditions and detergent compositions for the present concentrated laundering process can be mild and safe for the most delicate fabrics cleaned by the least experienced consumer without unduly sacrificing cleaning.

WASH LIQUOR APPLICATION STEP

The wash liquor for the present process can be prepared by mixing the detergent composition and water. In the case of granular detergent compositions, the granules must be dissolved and/or dispersed before the resulting wash liquor can be applied to the textiles. In the illustrated embodiment, such predissolution and/or predispersion occurs by placing a predetermined quantity of granules in wash liquor reservoir 89 which is then filled from the water supply, line 80 via control valve 82 and delivery line 96. If a highly concentrated liquid detergent composition is used, then a flow-through mixing cell, e.g., a static mixer, can be used as an alternative to the wash liquor reservoir to mix the detergent composition and water. However, in ranges of the minimal quantity of water, an appropriate concentrated aqueous liquid detergent composition can be applied "as is" without further dilution.

The wash liquor is applied as an aqueous liquid directly onto the textiles. Preferably, the textiles are dry when the wash liquor is applied. It is also desirable that the application of the wash liquor, especially when there is no free wash liquor, is such that it is substantially completely and evenly distributed onto the textiles. That is to say, that if the wash liquor is not evenly distributed over substantially all of the textiles, then the untreated portions will not be cleaned as well and/or those portions of the textiles which are treated with more than their proportionate share of the wash liquor may appear as "clean" spots after the concentrated laundering process has been carried out. It should be noted that with the larger quantities of wash liquor within the invention it is easier to make such a distribution. This is especially true with quantities of wash liquor exceeding the absorption capacity of the textiles.

The foregoing detailed description of a preferred machine embodiment to accomplish such an

application where there is no free wash liquor will be used in the following discussion.

In a home-type front loading automatic washing machine of the type described hereinbefore and illustrated in Figures 1—5, the wash liquor is pumped from either the wash liquor reservoir 89 or mixing cell (not shown) through a delivery line 95 which has a high pressure spray nozzle 100 attached at the end of it. The nozzle should be situated inside of the machine in such a position so as to optimize the even and complete application of the wash liquor onto the textiles. This can be accomplished by attaching the nozzle 100 in the tubular shaped extension 19 of the stationary drum 15, as generally shown in Figure 1. As an option, more than one nozzle can be used. Such multiple nozzles may be positioned so they will effectively increase the area of the drum that would be sprayed by the nozzles and, therefore, ensure a more complete application of the wash liquor onto the textiles. As an alternative to a nozzle, an atomizer (not shown) can be used. An atomizer is believed to be particularly desirable when minimal quantities of water are used because the wash liquor must be extremely finely divided to ensure uniform distribution. It should be noted that with quantities of wash liquor exceeding the absorption capacity of the textiles, but within the invention, less sophisticated means may be utilized to ensure good distribution of the wash liquor onto the textiles.

As generally described in the foregoing apparatus description, before the wash liquor is pumped through the delivery line 95 to the nozzle 100, the movable drum 40 is preferably rotated. The purpose of the rotation is to clear the textiles from the center of the drum so that they are not blocking the field of spray of the nozzle 100, to distribute them substantially uniformly along the peripheral wall 40, and to expose as much of their surface area to the initial spray as is feasible. This is preferably accomplished by initially driving movable drum 40 via concentrically mounted driven pulley 34 at a constant speed which is sufficient to force the textiles against the peripheral wall 41 of the movable drum 40 and thereafter driving movable drum 40 via eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28 at a reduced varying speed which allows the textiles to tumble continuously through the spray.

The pressure in the delivery line 95 should be high enough to produce a substantially flat fan-shaped spray of the wash liquor 230 through the nozzle 100, said spray preferably covering the entire depth of the movable drum 40, as generally shown in Figure 3.

This particularly preferred method of wash liquor application permits the textiles to be substantially completely and evenly contacted by the wash liquor. This permits the very effective detergent/soil interaction of the concentrated laundering process to occur. Additionally, such a method of wash liquor application is extremely efficient because when the quantity of wash liquor utilized does not exceed the absorption capacity of the textiles essentially all of the wash liquor is on the textiles.

A benefit of the concentrated laundering process is that effective cleaning results can be obtained over a wide range of wash liquor temperatures. The temperature of the wash liquor can range from 2°C to 90°C, preferably from 15°C to 70°C and most preferably from 25°C to 50°C. Surprisingly, the cleaning performance achieved at temperatures from 25°C to 50°C is as good as that achieved at temperatures above 50°C. Also, such low temperatures are especially safe for dyed and/or synthetic textiles. Dye transfer is minimized at such temperature, especially when there is no free wash liquor. If it is desired to perform the wash liquor application step at temperatures above ambient temperature, either the wash liquor or the incoming water from supply line 80 can be heated before the wash liquor is applied to the textiles. However, it is preferred that the temperature of the textiles not exceed 70°C, as this may result in excessive wrinkling and shrinkage. Furthermore, temperature-sensitive synthetic textiles should not be heated above their manufacturer-recommended washing temperatures.

APPLICATION OF ENERGY AFTER TEXTILES HAVE BEEN CONTACTED WITH WASH LIQUOR

In a preferred embodiment, energy can be applied to the textiles after they have been contacted by the wash liquor. It may be in the form of heat energy and/or mechanical energy, albeit they are not completely interchangeable, for a period ranging from 1 to 30 minutes, preferably from 5 to 15 minutes.

The application of heat energy permits the consumer to obtain excellent bleaching performance from bleaches such as sodium perborate, sodium percarbonate and hydrogen peroxide which are generally more effective at higher temperatures. This is not economical in a conventional home-type automatic wash process due to the cost of heating such large quantities of wash liquor. Further, since small quantities of water are used in the concentrated laundering process, conventional levels of bleach will have a higher effective concentration. This too contributes to the effective and/or efficient use of bleach in the concentrated laundering process.

In a preferred embodiment, heat energy is applied by recirculating moist air which is heated via heating element 165 to raise the temperature of the textiles to at least 60°C, the temperature at which hydrogen peroxide based bleaches become particularly reactive. In such a preferred embodiment the wash liquor incorporates from 0.05% to 0.2% by weight of a bleach material which is most effective above 55°C. In addition to the closed loop moist air recirculation system disclosed in Figure 1, numerous other methods may be used for the application of heat energy. Nonlimiting examples are microwaves, steam and solar energy.

As an alternative to the application of heat energy to activate the bleach, inorganic peroxide salt activators or low temperature active bleaches such as peroxyacids can be used. Such activated bleaches are effective below 50°C. Organic peroxide salt activators known in the art are described e.g. in U S Patents

4,248,928 and 4,220,562. Active bleaches such as organic peroxyacids and water soluble salts thereof are also well known in the art, e.g. in Johnston US A 4,126,573, Hutchins et al, US A 4,100,095. In an embodiment of the process wherein the temperature of the textiles with the wash liquor distributed therein is from 25°C to 50°C the wash liquor preferably comprises from 0.05% to 0.2% of an activated bleach or a bleach effective below 50°C.

Other benefits of the application of heat energy are the assistance in the distribution of wash liquor onto the textiles and lipid/oily soil removal. If during the wash liquor application step the wash liquor was not substantially evenly and completely distributed onto the textiles, then the application of heat energy does provide some additional distribution. Also, experimental evidence indicates that heat energy does assist somewhat in the removal of lipid/oily soil. Some other potential benefits of the application of heat energy are the effective use of enzymes and the creation of desirable detergent surfactant phases. Different enzymes are most effective at different temperatures. Therefore, the textiles could be heated through certain temperature ranges to maximize enzyme effectiveness. However, as discussed hereinbefore, heat energy does not provide a major performance benefit, except as discussed hereinbefore with respect to bleaches, to the concentrated laundering process. It is preferred that heat energy be applied such that the temperature of the textiles is preferably from 15°C to 70°C and more preferably from 25°C to 50°C.

The application of mechanical energy provides numerous benefits. Mechanical energy helps to distribute the wash liquor so that it is more evenly and completely distributed onto the textiles. Thus, if during the wash liquor application step the wash liquor was not substantially evenly and completely distributed onto the textiles, then the input of mechanical energy will enhance such distribution. Mechanical energy also minimizes the period of time that the same textiles will remain in intimate contact with each other. Consequently, contact dyeing is minimized. Also, it is believed that mechanical energy contributes to improved cleaning efficacy. However, with quantities of wash liquor exceeding the absorption capacity of the textiles, only a limited amount of mechanical energy should be applied in order to prevent oversudsing. But, this is dependent on the concentration and nature of the detergent composition in the wash liquor.

In the embodiment illustrated in Figures 1-5, mechanical energy can be applied by continuing rotation of the movable drum 40 at the last speed at which the wash liquor was applied. This creates a tumbling action by the textiles in movable drum 40 and results in the textiles being mechanically agitated.

THE RINSE

After the foregoing steps have been completed, the textiles are rinsed in a rinse liquor which preferably comprises clear water. Unlike a conventional automatic wash process wherein the goal of the rinse is to remove primarily the residual detergent composition, the goal of the present rinse is to remove the entire detergent composition and the soil. Thus, the present rinse step simultaneously performs the soil and detergent composition transport functions normally performed sequentially in conventional washing and conventional rinsing steps. Surprisingly, it has been observed that, during the rinse step, soil redeposition and dye transfer are minimal. Also, it has been observed that the rinse liquor contains stable emulsion particles whereas the rinse liquor in a conventional automatic wash process does not contain such emulsion particles.

In the preferred laundering apparatus illustrated in Figures 1-5, rinse liquor is introduced to the interior of movable drum 40 from water supply line 80 via control valve 83, delivery line 110 and applicator nozzle 120. Movable drum 40 is preferably rotated at varying speed via eccentrically mounted driven pulley 28 so that the textiles being rinsed are caused to tumble in a manner similar to the wash liquor application step. For more complete agitation of the articles being rinsed movable drum 40 may be stopped and its direction of rotation reversed several times throughout the rinse cycle. After the initial rinse has been completed, the rinse liquor is preferably removed from movable drum 40 by pumping it out via pump 140 without accelerating the rotation of the movable drum. This procedure can be repeated several times until the detergent composition and soil are removed. However, the textiles need not be spun out by high speed rotation of movable drum 40 between rinses. This minimizes the potential for wrinkling if the textiles are warm and also minimizes the potential for soil redeposition due to the rinse water being "filtered" through the textiles. If desired, adjuvants such as optical brighteners, fabric softeners and perfumes can be added to the rinse or applied, via the applicator nozzle 120, after the last rinse and distributed by tumbling. Bodying agents, such as starch, can also be added by spraying after the last rinse. Following the last rinse the textiles can be spun out by high speed rotation of movable drum 40.

An effective rinse can be accomplished in accordance with the present invention with reduced water consumption and, therefore, if heated water is used, reduced energy consumption. The amount of rinse liquor per kilogram of wash load is from 4 liters to 32 liters, preferably from 5 liters to 10 liters per rinse cycle. Rinse liquor levels below this amount would not produce enough free water on the surface of the textiles to adequately suspend the soil and detergent composition. Generally more than one rinse cycle is necessary to remove all of the soil and detergent composition from the textiles. The use of such small quantities of rinse liquor permits the consumer to perform an entire laundering cycle of the present invention with 25 liters or less of water per kilogram of wash load. The rinse liquor temperature is from 15°C to 55°C and preferably from 25°C to 45°C.

In a particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention carried out in the apparatus of Figures

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1—5, the complete rinse comprises two or three cycles which can be carried out in either cold or warm clear water. Each cycle can be from 1 to 10 minutes with each cycle not necessarily being the same length of time.

5 In a particularly preferred embodiment of the present invention, the weight of the dry wash load is determined by an automatic weight sensor (not shown) and the quantities of wash liquor, detergent composition, and rinse liquor are automatically regulated thereafter by control means known in the art and therefore not shown.

10 After the final rinsing step the laundered textiles can, if desired, be dried in the apparatus illustrated in Figures 1—5. This is done by positioning diverter valve 168 so that atmospheric air is drawn into connecting duct 171 by blower 160, heated by heating element 165, circulated through the tumbling textiles contained in the moving drum 40, withdrawn from drum 40 in a humid condition via connecting duct 167 and vented to atmosphere via connecting duct 170. Exercising this option enables the consumer to perform the entire laundering and drying process in a single apparatus and in continuous fashion.

15 The present concentrated laundering process can be employed to clean up even the dingiest of textiles and especially synthetic textiles in a number of laundering cycles. When an effective bleach is employed, the number of laundering cycles required for such purposes is reduced. This is believed to be due to the combination of excellent soil removal and substantial avoidance of excessive dye transfer and soil redeposition. Also, it has been observed that the present concentrated laundering process extends the useful "life" of textiles. This is believed to be due to the wash liquor lubricating the textile fibers.

20 Another aspect of the present invention is a granular paste, gel or liquid detergent composition packaged in association with instructions for use in the concentrated laundering process. When such detergent composition is combined with water it produces from just enough wash liquor to be substantially evenly and completely distributed onto a wash load of textiles to 5 kilograms of a wash liquor per kilogram of wash load of textiles, said wash liquor containing from 10 grams to 60 grams of the detergent composition per kilogram of wash load of textiles.

25 The process of this invention is primarily directed to household laundry which consists of wash loads essentially made up of textiles, i.e., the process is a small batch process, that typically cleans less than 10 kilograms of soiled textiles which are a mixture of textile types and/or colors. While the present concentrated laundry process has been described in detail in conjunction with a preferred home laundering apparatus, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the process can also be carried out on an industrial scale if provision is made for proper distribution of the wash liquor over the textiles and avoidance of appreciable amounts of free wash liquor in contact with the textiles.

The following examples are illustrative of the invention.

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EXAMPLE I

Three sets of polyester and polycotton swatches containing the following soil types were prepared: artificial sebum, triolein, CRISCO oil and a mixture of inorganic particulate soil and lipid soil. The three sets of swatches, with three clean swatches used to measure soil redeposition, were then sprayed with wash liquor containing 1.92 grams of ARIEL (a commercial detergent composition containing about 10% surfactant, 45% sodium tripolyphosphate detergency builder, 12% sodium perborate bleach, and 1% of an enzyme composition) in a miniature laundering apparatus which mimics the action of the exemplary laundering apparatus disclosed in the preferred apparatus description. This quantity of ARIEL corresponds to 32 grams of detergent composition per kilogram of wash load. The movable drum in the miniature laundering apparatus had a 228 mm diameter and a 228 mm depth. The swatches were then mechanically agitated at room temperature for seven minutes by rotating the movable drum. The swatches were then rinsed in another miniature laundering apparatus having a 152 mm diameter and 101 mm depth movable drum with .462 liters tap water for two minutes. (The size of the movable drum used for the rinse was selected to be proportional to the textile load although the size of the movable drum used for the wash liquor application was larger because spray-on was not feasible in the small 152 mm drum.) The rinse step was performed three times. The above procedure was repeated with wash liquors comprising various quantities of water and 1.92 grams of ARIEL. The swatches were then measured to obtain the difference in Hunter Whiteness Units Filtered (Δ HWUF). This measurement corresponds to the amount of soil removed from the swatches, with the higher number signifying greater soil removal. HWUF measurements exclude the effect of brightener, thereby measuring only soil removal. The results were as follows.

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5		Δ HWUF		
		Weight ratio of wash liquor to swatches		
		1:1	2.5:1	3.5:1
	Artificial sebum polyester	9.4	6.9	4.6
10	Artificial sebum polycotton	20.1	14.7	12.0
	CRISCO polyester	6.1	3.7	2.5
	CRISCO polycotton	8.7	6.2	.9
15	Triolein polyester	8.9	5.1	5.3
	Triolein polycotton	16.3	6.6	6.4
	Soiled polyester	27.4	20.5	12.0
20	Soiled polycotton	33.1	28.8	19.4
	Polyester redeposition	-9.0	-11.5	-17.2
	Polycotton redeposition	-2.7	-4.0	-7.3

25 The data indicate that as the quantity of water in the wash liquor is increased above the wash liquor to swatches ratio of 2.5:1, there is less soil removal and more soil redeposition.

EXAMPLE II

30 A washload was prepared in the miniature laundering apparatus of Example I consisting of the following textiles: 20 89 mm x 89 mm white polycotton swatches, 15 101 mm by 101 mm white polyester swatches, four 152 mm x 152 mm white terry cloth towels. One 152 mm x 152 mm red terry cloth towel, which is an excessive dye bleeder, was used as a dye source. The dry weight of the textiles was as follows:

35	Dry weight of textiles	
		(Grams)
	4 white terries	36
	1 red terry	~9
40	15 white polyester swatches	32.2
	20 white polycotton swatches	26.4
	Total	~103.6

45 The wash liquor was prepared by dissolving 3.3 grams of ARIEL in 200 ml. of tap water. The movable drum was then rotated and the wash liquor was sprayed onto the textiles until contact dyeing was first visually observed. The weight of the wash liquor absorbed onto the textiles was calculated. The results were as follows:

50		Weight of wet textiles (grams)	Weight of wash liquor absorbed by textiles (grams)
55	4 white terries	108.3	72.3
	1 red terry	~27.1	~18.1
	15 white polyester swatches	82.2	50.0
60	20 white polycotton swatches	50.8	24.4
	Total	~268.8	~165.2

65 Then the ratio of the weight of wash liquor absorbed by the textiles to the dry weight of the textiles was calculated.

	Ratio of weight of wash liquor absorbed to dry weight of textiles
4 white terries	2.0
1 red terry	~2.0
15 white polyester swatches	1.6
20 white polycottons	.9
Total	~1.6

These data indicate that when excessive dye bleeders are included in a typical wash load, contact dyeing occurs when the weight of the wash liquor exceeds $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the total weight of the textiles.

EXAMPLE III

Two sets of cotton swatches were prepared with each swatch containing one of the following four stains: brown gravy, coffee, grape and tea. Two sets of polyester and polycotton swatches were prepared with each swatch containing one of the following soil types: artificial sebum, artificial sebum plus particulate soil and triolein. Then 24 dingy swatches were prepared in which half were made from a cotton T-shirt and half were made from a polycotton sheet. All of the above swatches were pinned to two cotton towels for a combined weight of 227 g. A 2.495 kg "dummy" load consisting of clean temperature-sensitive synthetic textiles and the swatches were placed in an apparatus similar to that shown in Figure 1. The textiles were then rotated and a wash liquor consisting of 96 grams of ARIEL dissolved in 2.84 liters of tap water which was sprayed onto the textiles. The textiles were then rotated at room temperature for 10 minutes and then subsequently rinsed in 20 liters of water. The rinse step was repeated twice. The above procedure was repeated three more times with only the temperature of the wash load during the 10 minute rotation period being varied.

The data were obtained in ΔE units and $\Delta HWUF$ units. ΔE units are a measurement of the change in color of the swatch resulting from the wash cycle. Change in color is proportional to the amount of soil removal, with a higher ΔE value corresponding to greater soil removal. The above procedure was repeated and the average of the results of the two replicates is as follows:

		ΔE			
	45*	Rm	120	150	180
			(Temperature °F.)		
	(7.2°C)		(49°C)	(65.5°C)	(82.2°C)
Brown gravy	2.2	4.9	4.9	8.6	7.6
Coffee	3.8	5.8	6.5	6.2	6.3
Grape	3.1	6.4	7.9	10.6	10.6
Tea	2.0	5.5	7.2	8.9	8.4
Artificial sebum					
polyester	6.4	13.1	11.4	14.6	12.4
Artificial sebum					
polycotton	6.5	11.2	11.0	10.6	10.3
Triolein polyester	4.7	5.0	7.0	6.0	7.3
Triolein polycotton	6.3	7.6	8.6	7.5	8.5
		$\Delta HWUF$			
Soiled polyester	27.3	42.9	43.9	44.1	40.3
Soiled polycotton	35.2	48.6	48.6	48.0	48.5

* Same laundry load as in Example V and only one replicate.

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The data indicate that the concentrated laundering process is only slightly temperature dependent. Higher temperatures were significant for stain removal, but that is primarily due to the bleach in ARIEL which becomes more effective at higher temperatures.

5 It was visually observed that at temperatures of 150°F (65.5°C) and 180°F (82.2°C) that the sensitive synthetic textiles suffered much wrinkling and shrinkage. It is surprising that the level of cleaning at "cool" temperatures, e.g., less than about 40°C, is extremely good. prior to this invention it was believed impossible to obtain this level of cleaning at these temperatures.

EXAMPLE IV

10 Twelve old dingy T-shirts and pillow cases were washed along with a family bundle according to the same procedure as outlined in Example III. The temperature of the wash load during the ten minute rotation period was 145°F. (62.8°C). The T-shirts and pillowcases were used normally in between wash cycles. Hunter Whiteness Units were measured before and after the indicated number of wash cycles to obtain the difference in Hunter Whiteness Units (Δ HWU). The results were as follows:

	Pillowcase		
		Δ HWU	No. of wash cycles
	1	26.1	15
20	2	37.0	16
	3	58.6	6
	4	55.1	6
25	5	51.0	6
	6	49.0	6
	7	13.9	7
30	8	12.8	7
	9	11.3	3
	10	10.0	3
	11	39.6	9
35	12	41.6	9
	T-shirt		
		Δ HWU	No. of wash cycles
	1	14.2	17
40	2	13.9	17
	3	34.2	11
	4	27.8	11
45	5	17.6	12
	6	17.5	10
	7	18.3	15
50	8	14.2	15
	9	19.5	6
	10	14.9	7
55	11	16.3	6
	12	17.5	5

60 The data indicate that there was considerable soil removal from the pillowcases and T-shirts and their clean condition was maintained. This level of performance cannot be achieved with a conventional automatic wash process.

EXAMPLE V

65 A six pound wash load was prepared that consisted of a 2.495 kg load of actual household laundry and 227 g load made up of cotton, polyester, polycotton swatches pinned to two cotton towels. Each cotton swatch contained one of the following stains: brown gravy, coffee, grape and tea. Each polyester and

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polycotton swatch contained one of the following soils: artificial sebum, triolein and a mixture of inorganic particulate soil and lipid soil. The wash load was then washed according to the same procedure as outlined in Example III. The temperature of the wash load during the ten minute rotation period was 145°F. (62.8°C). The above procedure was repeated two more times with reduced quantities of ARIEL.

The above wash procedure was repeated with the following detergent compositions: TOP (a commercial detergent composition containing enzymes) and ZAB (a built commercial detergent composition containing enzymes). This procedure was also repeated with reduced quantities of detergent compositions.

The data were obtained in ΔE units and $\Delta HWUF$ units. The results were as follows:

ΔE			
ARIEL			
	96	48	24
	(Grams of detergent)		
Brown gravy	14.5	7.0	5.0
Coffee	12.6	5.6	6.2
Grape	14.8	2.8	5.3
Tea	14.3	5.7	2.5
Artificial sebum polyester	9.0	8.0	3.9
Artificial sebum polycotton	8.2	6.9	4.3
Triolein polyester	7.6	5.3	3.8
Triolein polycotton	10.8	7.2	3.7
$\Delta HWUF$			
Soiled polyester	40.2	17.2	4.0
Soiled polycotton	51.3	34.8	21.7
ΔE			
TOP			
	96	48	
	(Grams of detergent)		
Brown gravy	8.8	6.2	
Coffee	8.1	5.1	
Grape	7.8	2.3	
Tea	4.4	2.9	
Artificial sebum polyester	9.3	5.4	
Artificial sebum polycotton	10.5	8.2	
Triolein polyester	5.7	4.0	
Triolein polycotton	10.5	8.2	
$\Delta HWUF$			
Soiled polyester	38.3	21.0	
Soiled polycotton	43.7	34.2	
ΔE			
ZAB			
	96	48	

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(Grams of detergent composition)		
5	Brown gravy	9.6 6.1
	Coffee	8.4 5.3
	Grape	5.8 2.1
	Tea	5.2 2.7
10	Artificial sebum polyester	6.2 4.0
	Artificial sebum polycotton	7.7 4.2
	Triolein polyester	8.3 4.1
	Triolein polycotton	10.2 6.7
15		Δ HWUF
	Soiled polyester	34.7 19.8
20	Soiled polycotton	41.3 30.9

The data indicate that as the quantity of detergent in the wash liquor is reduced, the amount of soil removal from the swatches was also reduced.

EXAMPLE VI

The following typical granular detergent composition was prepared:

		g
30	Sodium C ₁₆₋₁₈ alkyl sulfate	5.5
	Sodium C ₁₂ linear alkylbenzene sulfonate	3.5
	C ₁₄₋₁₆ alkyl polyethoxylate	5.5
	Sodium tripolyphosphate	24.4
35	Zeolite A	17.6
	Sodium carbonate	10.5
	Sodium silicate (2.0 r)	1.9
40	Sodium sulfate	21.0
	Water	8.9
	Miscellaneous	1.2

Two sets of polyester and polycotton swatches containing the following soil types were prepared: artificial sebum, triolein, CRISCO oil, beef tallow and a mixture of inorganic particulate soil and lipid soil. The two sets of swatches, with two clean polyester swatches and two clean polycotton swatches used to measure soil redeposition, and 14 polyester and 15 polycotton clean swatches which constitute a "dummy" load were then placed in a miniature laundering apparatus which mimics the action of the exemplary laundering apparatus disclosed in the preferred apparatus description. The swatches were then sprayed with wash liquor containing 2.29 grams of the above granular detergent composition. The quantity of wash liquor corresponded to about twice the dry weight of all of the swatches and the quantity of detergent composition corresponded to 17.6 grams per kilogram of swatches. The movable drum in the miniature laundering apparatus had a 228 mm diameter and a 228 mm depth. The swatches were then mechanically agitated at room temperature for ten minutes by rotating the movable drum. The swatches were then rinsed in one liter of tap water for two minutes and then dried in a conventional automatic dryer. This procedure was repeated three times. The Δ HWUF was calculated.

The above procedure was repeated with increased quantities of wash liquor, but constant wash liquor concentration. However, with weight ratios of wash liquor to swatches of 5 and 7, the movable drum was rotated gently during the ten minute mechanical agitation period so as to prevent oversudsing. The results were as follows:

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		Weight Ratio of Wash			
		Liquor to Dry Swatches	Δ HWUF	Breakout*	
Artificial sebum					
polyester	2	15.51		B	C
	3	14.24			C
	5	16.93	A	B	
	7	17.47	A		
Artificial sebum					
polycotton	2	12.42		B	
	3	12.97		B	
	5	16.22	A		
	7	18.07	A		
CRISCO polyester	2	8.53	A		
	3	6.52	A		
	5	8.01	A		
	7	9.48	A		
CRISCO polycotton	2	10.70		B	
	3	10.36		B	
	5	13.94	A		
	7	15.57	A		
Triolein polyester	2	12.41		B	
	3	13.08		B	
	5	15.58	A		
	7	14.34	A	B	
Triolein polycotton	2	13.02		B	
	3	13.24		B	
	5	16.48	A		
	7	18.30	A		
Beef tallow polyester	2	10.84		B	
	3	10.99		B	
	5	14.12	A		
	7	15.02	A		
Beef tallow polycotton	2	9.41		B	
	3	9.77		B	
	5	13.99	A		
	7	15.31	A		
Soiled polyester	2	24.43		B	
	3	25.40		B	
	5	28.51	A		
	7	29.99	A		

5	Soiled polycotton	2	29.83		B
		3	32.25	A	B
		5	35.97	A	
		7	35.48	A	
10	Polyester redeposition	2	-1.21		B
		3	-1.35		B
		5	.49	A	
		7	.92	A	
15	Polycotton redeposition	2	-1.99		B
		3	-1.97		B
		5	-.93	A	
		7	-1.09	A	B

*The Breakout was determined by an analysis of variance with the letters A, B and C representing a significant difference at a 95% confidence level. For example, with the artificial sebum polyester swatches there was a significant difference between the weight ratios of 2 and 7, 3 and 5, 3 and 7, but no significant difference between weight ratios of 2 and 3, 2 and 5 and 5 and 7.

These data indicate that as the weight ratio is increased from 5 to 7 there is no significant increase in soil removal, albeit 40% more detergent composition is applied to the swatches. Also there appears to be not much increase in soil removal as the weight ratio is increased from 2 to 3 and, then, to 5 in view of the quantity of the increase of detergent composition applied to the textiles.

Claims

1. A process for laundering a wash load of soiled textiles characterized in that it comprises the successive steps of:

(a) producing a wash liquor comprising from 0.5% to 60% by weight of detergent composition;
(b) distributing substantially evenly and completely onto the entire wash load of said soiled textiles in their substantially dry state a quantity of said wash liquor applied in a finely divided form, said quantity lying in the range from just enough to distribute said wash liquor substantially evenly and completely onto said textiles to 5.0 times the dry weight of said textiles, said wash liquor containing from 5 grams to 200 grams of said detergent composition per kilogram of said textiles, said textiles being subjected to mechanical energy by being tumbled while said wash liquor is being distributed thereon;

(c) allowing said quantity of wash liquor to remain in contact with said textiles for a period of time during which, if there is more than a minimal amount of free liquor in excess of the absorption capacity of said textiles, limited mechanical energy is applied to said textiles at a rate not exceeding that employed during distribution of the wash liquor so as to prevent oversudsing;

(d) after steps a) b) and c) have been completed, rinsing said textiles with a quantity of an aqueous liquid rinse liquor sufficient to produce enough free water on the surface of said textiles to adequately suspend the soil and the detergent composition; and

(e) after step (d) has been completed, separating said rinse liquor containing said wash liquor and said soil from said textiles.

2. A process according to claim 1 wherein in step (b) said wash liquor quantity is no more than 2.5 times the dry weight of said textiles.

3. A process according to either one of claims 1 and 2 wherein the amount of wash liquor distributed onto the textiles is from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1.5 times the dry weight of said textiles.

4. A process according to any one of claims 1—3 wherein in step (b) said wash liquor is distributed onto said textiles by means of a spray, preferably an atomised spray.

5. A process according to any one of claims 1—4 wherein in step (b) said textiles are tumbled in a rotating horizontal drum while said wash liquor is being distributed thereon.

6. A process according to any one of claims 1—5 wherein in step (c) the wash liquor is allowed to remain in contact with said textiles for from 1 to 30, preferably from 5 to 15, minutes before said textiles are rinsed.

7. A process according to any one of claims 1—6 wherein said wash liquor comprises from 0.5% to 15% by weight of detergent composition.

8. A process according to claim 7 wherein said wash liquor comprises from 1.3% to 5% by weight of detergent composition.

9. A process according to any one of claims 1—8 wherein said textiles are rinsed with from 4 to 32 liters



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5	Soiled polycotton	2	29.83		B
		3	32.25	A	B
		5	35.97	A	
		7	35.48	A	
10	Polyester redeposition	2	-1.21		B
		3	-1.35		B
		5	.49	A	
		7	.92	A	
15	Polycotton redeposition	2	-1.99		B
		3	-1.97		B
		5	-.93	A	
		7	-1.09	A	B

*The Breakout was determined by an analysis of variance with the letters A, B and C representing a significant difference at a 95% confidence level. For example, with the artificial sebum polyester swatches there was a significant difference between the weight ratios of 2 and 7, 3 and 5, 3 and 7, but no significant difference between weight ratios of 2 and 3, 2 and 5 and 5 and 7.

These data indicate that as the weight ratio is increased from 5 to 7 there is no significant increase in soil removal, albeit 40% more detergent composition is applied to the swatches. Also there appears to be not much increase in soil removal as the weight ratio is increased from 2 to 3 and, then, to 5 in view of the quantity of the increase of detergent composition applied to the textiles.

Claims

1. A process for laundering a wash load of soiled textiles characterized in that it comprises the successive steps of:

(a) producing a wash liquor comprising from 0.5% to 60% by weight of detergent composition;

(b) distributing substantially evenly and completely onto the entire wash load of said soiled textiles in their substantially dry state a quantity of said wash liquor applied in a finely divided form, said quantity lying in the range from just enough to distribute said wash liquor substantially evenly and completely onto said textiles to 5.0 times the dry weight of said textiles, said wash liquor containing from 5 grams to 200 grams of said detergent composition per kilogram of said textiles, said textiles being subjected to mechanical energy by being tumbled while said wash liquor is being distributed thereon;

(c) allowing said quantity of wash liquor to remain in contact with said textiles for a period of time during which, if there is more than a minimal amount of free liquor in excess of the absorption capacity of said textiles, limited mechanical energy is applied to said textiles at a rate not exceeding that employed during distribution of the wash liquor so as to prevent oversudsing;

(d) after steps a) b) and c) have been completed, rinsing said textiles with a quantity of an aqueous liquid rinse liquor sufficient to produce enough free water on the surface of said textiles to adequately suspend the soil and the detergent composition; and

(e) after step (d) has been completed, separating said rinse liquor containing said wash liquor and said soil from said textiles.

2. A process according to claim 1 wherein in step (b) said wash liquor quantity is no more than 2.5 times the dry weight of said textiles.

3. A process according to either one of claims 1 and 2 wherein the amount of wash liquor distributed onto the textiles is from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1.5 times the dry weight of said textiles.

4. A process according to any one of claims 1—3 wherein in step (b) said wash liquor is distributed onto said textiles by means of a spray, preferably an atomised spray.

5. A process according to any one of claims 1—4 wherein in step (b) said textiles are tumbled in a rotating horizontal drum while said wash liquor is being distributed thereon.

6. A process according to any one of claims 1—5 wherein in step (c) the wash liquor is allowed to remain in contact with said textiles for from 1 to 30, preferably from 5 to 15, minutes before said textiles are rinsed.

7. A process according to any one of claims 1—6 wherein said wash liquor comprises from 0.5% to 15% by weight of detergent composition.

8. A process according to claim 7 wherein said wash liquor comprises from 1.3% to 5% by weight of detergent composition.

9. A process according to any one of claims 1—8 wherein said textiles are rinsed with from 4 to 32 liters



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of water per kilogram of said textiles per rinse.

10. A process according to Claim 9 wherein said textiles are rinsed with from 5 to 10 liters of water per kilogram of said textiles per rinse.

5 11. A process according to any one of Claims 1—10 wherein said textiles are subjected to from 2 to 3 rinses.

12. A process according to any one of Claims 1—11 wherein the temperature of said wash liquor is from 15°C to 70°C.

13. A process according to Claim 12 wherein the temperature of the wash liquor is from 25°C to 50°C.

10 14. A process according to any one of Claims 1—13 wherein said wash liquor contains from 0.04% to 1.5% by weight of detergent surfactants.

15. A process according to any one of Claims 1—14 wherein said wash liquor contains from 0.15% to 1% by weight of detergent surfactants and from 0.1% to 5% by weight of detergency builder.

16. A process according to Claim 15 wherein said wash liquor contains from 1 gram to 45 grams per kilogram of said wash load of said detergent surfactant and from 10 grams to 50 grams per kilogram of said wash load of said detergency builder.

17. A process according to any one of Claims 1—16 wherein said wash liquor further comprises from 0.05% to 0.2% by weight of a bleach material which is most effective above 55°C and the temperature of said textiles with the wash liquor distributed thereon is at least 60°C.

20 18. A process according to any one of claims 1—17 wherein said wash liquor further comprises from 0.05% to 0.2% by weight of an activated bleach, or a bleach effective below 50°C, and wherein the temperature of said textiles with the wash liquor distributed therein is from 25° to 50°C.

19. A process according to any one of claims 1—18 wherein said wash liquor further comprises up to 0.15% by weight of an enzyme.

25 20. A laundering apparatus suitable for carrying out the process of claim 1, comprising a drum (40) rotatable about a horizontal axis and containing a plurality of lifting vanes (47), said drum being adapted to retain the soiled textiles during laundering, means (80—82, 88—89, 91—94, 101, 195 and 106) for producing an aqueous wash liquor, means (84—87, 95) for applying all of said wash liquor in finely divided form on to said soiled textiles, means (83, 110, 120) for applying rinsing water to said washed textiles, said rotatable drum (40) being moisture-pervious and being mounted within a moisture-impervious stationary chamber (15), said stationary chamber including means (21, 140, 142) for simultaneously removing said concentrated wash liquor, said soils and said rinse liquor from said moisture-pervious drum; and said moisture-pervious drum (40) being connected to a drive motor (60) adapted to impart mechanical energy to the laundered textiles, characterised in that the means for applying the wash liquor comprises spraying means (106) and in that the drum is provided with speed control means (27, 28, 38) adapted to rotate the drum (40) during application of the wash liquor at a speed less than that sufficient to overcome gravitational forces acting on the soiled textiles, to lift the textiles to a height within the drum such that the textiles can fall under gravity in front of the spray means.

35 21. A laundering apparatus according to claim 20 including the means (160, 161, 164) for applying heat energy to a wash liquor-containing textiles housed within said moisture-pervious drum.

40 22. A laundering apparatus according to claim 21 wherein said means for applying heat energy to said wash liquor-containing textiles comprises a closed loop recirculating air system including heating means (165) and handling means (163, 166, 167, 172), said closed loop system having its opposite ends (180, 190) connected to said stationary drum (15), whereby air recirculated through said system is forced to pass continuously through said moisture-pervious movable drum (40) and the textiles contained therein.

45 23. A laundering apparatus according to claim 22 including means (168, 169, 170, 171) for venting said closed loop system to atmosphere, whereby unheated atmospheric air is drawn into said system by said air handling means, passed over said heating means, forced to enter said moisture-pervious chamber, passed through said textiles and exhausted to atmosphere.

50 24. A laundering apparatus according to claim 23 wherein said means for venting said closed loop system to atmosphere comprises a diverter valve (168), whereby said laundering apparatus may be employed to thermally dry the laundered textiles contained in said moisture-pervious chamber.

Patentansprüche

55 1. Ein Verfahren zum Wäschewaschen einer Waschbeschickung verschmutzter Textilien, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß es die folgenden aufeinanderfolgenden Stufen umfaßt:

(a) Herstellen einer Waschlauge, die 0,5 Gew.-% bis 60 Gew.-% einer Detergenezusammensetzung enthält;

60 (b) im wesentlichen gleichmäßiges und vollständiges Verteilen einer in einer feinverteilten Form aufgetragenen Menge der genannten Waschflüssigkeit auf die gesamte, in ihrem im wesentlichen trockenem Zustand vorliegende Waschbeschickung von verschmutzten Textilien, wobei die genannte Menge in dem Bereich von gerade genügend, um die genannte Waschflüssigkeit im wesentlichen gleichmäßig und vollständig auf den genannten Textilien zu verteilen, bis zum 5,0-fachen des Trockengewichtes der genannten Textilien liegt, die genannte Waschflüssigkeit 5 g bis 200 g der genannten



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Detergensenzusammensetzung je kg der genannten Textilien enthält, und die genannten Textilien unter Umwälzen mechanischer Energie ausgesetzt werden, während die genannte Waschflüssigkeit darauf verteilt wird;

5 (c) Belassen der genannten Menge von Waschflüssigkeit in Kontakt mit den genannten Textilien während eines Zeitraumes, innerhalb dessen, falls mehr als eine Mindestmenge an ungebundener, die Absorptionskapazität der genannten Textilien überschreitender Flüssigkeit vorliegt, auf die genannten Textilien eine begrenzte mechanische Energie in einem Ausmaß zur Einwirkung gebracht wird, welche jenes nicht überschreitet, welches während der Verteilung der Waschflüssigkeit angewendet worden ist, um Übersäumen zu vermeiden;

10 (d) Spülen der genannten Textilien, nachdem die Stufen a), b) und c) beendet worden sind, mit einer ausreichenden Menge an wässriger, flüssiger Spüllauge, um genügend ungebundenes Wasser an der Oberfläche der genannten Textilien zu bilden, um den Schmutz und die Detergensenzusammensetzung hinreichend zu suspendieren; und

(e) Abtrennen, nachdem Stufe (d) beendet worden ist, der genannten Spüllauge, welche die genannte 15 Waschlauge und den genannten Schmutz enthält, von den genannten Textilien.

2. Ein Verfahren nach Anspruch 1, wobei in Stufe (b) die Menge der genannten Waschlauge nicht größer ist als das 2,5-fache des Trockengewichtes der genannten Textilien.

3. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 und 2, wobei die Menge an auf den Textilien verteilter 20 Waschlauge das 2- bis 1,5-fache des Trockengewichtes der genannten Textilien ausmacht.

4. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3, wobei in Stufe (b) die genannte Waschlauge auf den genannten Textilien mittels eines Sprays, vorzugsweise eines feinerstäubten Sprays, verteilt wird.

5. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, wobei in Stufe (b) die genannten Textilien in einer rotierenden, horizontalen Trommel umgewälzt werden, während die genannte Waschlauge auf den Textilien verteilt wird.

25 6. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 5, wobei in Stufe (c) die Waschlauge 1 bis 30, vorzugsweise 5 bis 15, Minuten lang mit den genannten Textilien in Kontakt belassen wird, bevor die genannten Textilien gespült werden.

7. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 6, wobei die genannte Waschlauge 0,5 Gew.-% bis 15 Gew.-% an Detergensenzusammensetzung enthält.

30 8. Ein Verfahren nach Anspruch 7, wobei die genannte Waschlauge 1,3 Gew.-% bis 5 Gew.-% Detergensenzusammensetzung enthält.

9. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 8, wobei die genannten Textilien mit 4 bis 32 l Wasser je Kilogramm der genannten Textilien pro Spülung gespült werden.

35 10. Ein Verfahren nach Anspruch 9, wobei die genannten Textilien mit 5 bis 10 l Wasser je Kilogramm der genannten Textilien pro Spülung gespült werden.

11. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 10, wobei die genannten Textilien 2 bis 3 Spülungen unterworfen werden.

12. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 11, wobei die Temperatur der genannten Waschlauge 15° C bis 70° C beträgt.

40 13. Ein Verfahren nach Anspruch 12, wobei die Temperatur der Waschlauge 25° C bis 50° C beträgt.

14. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 13, wobei die genannte Waschlauge 0,04 Gew.-% bis 1,5 Gew.-% an Detergens-grenzflächenaktiven Mitteln enthält.

45 15. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 14, wobei die genannte Waschflüssigkeit 0,15 Gew.-% bis 1 Gew.-% an Detergens-grenzflächenaktiven Mitteln und 0,1 Gew.-% bis 5 Gew.-% Detergensgerüststoff enthält.

16. Ein Verfahren nach Anspruch 15, wobei die genannte Waschflüssigkeit 1 g bis 45 g je Kilogramm der genannten Waschbeschickung an genanntem Detergens-grenzflächenaktivem Mittel und 10 g bis 50 g je Kilogramm der genannten Waschbeschickung an Detergensgerüststoff enthält.

50 17. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 16, wobei die genannte Waschlauge weiterhin 0,05 Gew.-% bis 0,2 Gew.-% eines Bleichmittelmateri- als, das über 55° C am wirksamsten ist, enthält, und die Temperatur der genannten, mit der Waschlauge darauf verteilten Textilien wenigstens 60° C beträgt.

18. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 17, wobei die genannte Waschlauge weiterhin 0,05 Gew.-% bis 0,2 Gew.-% eines aktivierten Bleichmittels, oder eins unter 50° C wirksamen Bleichmittels, enthält, und wobei die Temperatur der genannten Textilien mit der darauf verteilten Waschlauge 25° bis 50° 55 C beträgt.

19. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 18, wobei die genannte Waschlauge weiterhin bis zu 0,15 Gew.-% eines Enzyms enthält.

60 20. Eine zur Ausführung des Verfahrens des Anspruchs 1 geeignete Wäschewaschvorrichtung, umfassend eine um eine horizontale Achse drehbare und eine Mehrzahl von Hebeflügeln (47) enthaltende Trommel (40), wobei die genannte Trommel geeignet ist, die verschmutzten Textilien während des Wäschewaschens aufzunehmen, Mittel (80—82, 88—89, 91—94, 101, 195 und 106) zum Herstellen einer wässrigen Waschlauge, Mittel (84—87, 95) zum Aufbringen der gesamten genannten Waschlauge in feinverteilter Form auf die genannten verschmutzten Textilien, Mittel (83, 110, 120) zum Aufbringen von Spülwasser auf die genannten gewaschenen Textilien, wobei die genannte drehbare Trommel (40) 65 feuchtigkeitsdurchlässig und innerhalb einer feuchtigkeitsundurchlässigen, stationären Kammer (15)



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montiert ist, die genannte stationäre Kammer Mittel (21, 140, 142) zum gleichzeitigen Entfernen der genannten konzentrierten Waschlauge, des genannten Schmutzes und der genannten Spüllauge aus der genannten feuchtigkeitsdurchlässigen Trommel umfaßt; und die genannte feuchtigkeitsdurchlässige Trommel (40) mit einem Antriebsmotor (60), der zur Übertragung von mechanischer Energie auf die zu waschenden Textilien geeignet ist, verbunden ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Mittel zum Aufbringen der Waschflüssigkeit Sprüheinrichtungen (106) umfassen, und daß die Trommel mit Geschwindigkeitsregelungseinrichtungen (27, 28, 38) ausgestattet ist, welche geeignet sind, die Trommel (40) während des Aufbringens der Waschlauge mit einer Geschwindigkeit in Drehung zu versetzen, die geringer ist als jene, welche zum Überwinden von Gravitationskräften, die auf die verschmutzten Textilien einwirken, ausreichend ist, und um die Textilien innerhalb der Trommel auf eine solche Höhe zu heben, daß die Textilien unter Schwerkrafteinfluß vor den Sprüheinrichtungen herunterfallen können.

21. Eine Wäschewaschvorrichtung nach Anspruch 20, umfassend Mittel (160, 161, 164), um Wärmeenergie auf die Waschlauge-hältigen Textilien, die in der genannten feuchtigkeitsdurchlässigen Trommel eingeschlossen sind, zur Einwirkung zu bringen.

22. Eine Wäschewaschvorrichtung nach Anspruch 21, wobei die genannten Mittel, um Wärmeenergie auf die genannten Waschlauge-hältigen Textilien zur Einwirkung zu bringen, ein geschlossenes Umluftschleifensystem umfassen, welches Heizeinrichtungen (165) und Führungseinrichtungen (163, 166, 167, 172) umfaßt, wobei das geschlossene Schleifensystem mit seinen entgegengesetzten Enden (180, 190) mit der genannten stationären Trommel (15) verbunden ist, wodurch die durch das genannte System im Kreislauf geführte Luft kontinuierlich durch die genannte feuchtigkeitsdurchlässige, bewegliche Trommel (40) und die darin enthaltenen Textilien hindurchgetrieben wird.

23. Eine Wäschewaschvorrichtung nach Anspruch 22, umfassend Mittel (168, 169, 170, 171) zum Entlüften des genannten geschlossenen Schleifensystems an die Atmosphäre, wobei nicht-erhitzte Atmosphärenluft in das genannte System durch die genannten Luftführungseinrichtungen eingesogen, über die genannten Heizeinrichtungen geführt, zum Eintritt in die genannte feuchtigkeitsdurchlässige Trommel gezwungen, durch die genannten Textilien geführt und an die Atmosphäre ausgestoßen wird.

24. Eine Wäschewaschvorrichtung nach Anspruch 23, wobei die genannten Mittel zur Entlüftung des genannten geschlossenen Schleifensystems an die Atmosphäre ein Umleitventil (168) umfassen, wodurch die genannte Wäschewaschvorrichtung angewendet werden kann, um die in der genannten feuchtigkeitsdurchlässigen Trommel enthaltenen gewaschenen Textilien unter Wärmeeinwirkung zu trocknen.

Revendications

1. Procédé de blanchissage d'une charge de lavage de textiles salis, caractérisé en ce qu'il comprend les étapes successives qui consistent:

(a) à produire une liqueur de lavage comprenant de 0,5% à 60% en poids de composition détergente; (b) à distribuer essentiellement uniformément et entièrement, sur la totalité de la charge de lavage desdits textiles salis, à leur état essentiellement sec, une quantité de ladite liqueur de lavage appliquée sous une forme finement divisée, ladite quantité se situant dans l'intervalle d'au moins juste suffisamment pour distribuer ladite liqueur de lavage essentiellement uniformément et entièrement sur lesdits textiles jusqu'à 5,0 fois le poids sec desdits textiles, ladite liqueur de lavage contenant de 5 g à 200 g de ladite composition détergente par kilogramme desdits textiles, lesdits textiles étant soumis à une énergie mécanique en étant agités dans un tambour, pendant que ladite liqueur est distribuée dessus;

(c) à laisser ladite quantité de liqueur de lavage en contact avec lesdits textiles pendant une période de temps au cours de laquelle, s'il y a plus d'une quantité minimale de liqueur libre en plus de la capacité d'absorption desdits textiles, on applique une énergie mécanique limitée auxdits textiles à une vitesse ne dépassant pas celle employée pendant la distribution de la liqueur de lavage, de manière à empêcher un moussage trop important;

(d) après avoir terminé les étapes (a), (b) et (c), à rincer lesdits textiles avec une quantité de liqueur de rinçage liquide aqueuse suffisante pour produire suffisamment d'eau libre sur la surface desdits textiles pour mettre en suspension de façon adéquate les salissures et la composition détergente; et

(e) après avoir terminé l'étape (d), à séparer desdits textiles ladite liqueur de rinçage contenant ladite liqueur de lavage et lesdites salissures.

2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel, dans l'étape (b), ladite quantité de liqueur de lavage n'est pas supérieure à 2,5 fois le poids sec desdits textiles.

3. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 et 2, dans lequel la quantité de liqueur de lavage distribuée sur les textiles est de $\frac{1}{2}$ à 1,5 fois le poids sec desdits textiles.

4. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, dans lequel, dans l'étape (b), ladite liqueur de lavage est distribuée sur lesdits textiles au moyen d'une pulvérisation, de préférence une pulvérisation atomisée.

5. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel, dans l'étape (b), lesdits textiles sont agités dans un tambour à rotation horizontale, pendant que ladite liqueur de lavage est distribuée dessus.

6. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 5, dans lequel, dans l'étape (c) on laisse la



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liqueur de lavage au contact desdits textiles pendant 1 à 30, de préférence 5 à 15, minutes, avant de rincer lesdits textiles.

7. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 6, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage comprend de 0,5% à 15% en poids de composition détergente.

8. Procédé selon la revendication 7, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage comprend de 1,3% à 5% en poids de composition détergente.

9. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 8, dans lequel lesdits textiles sont rincés avec de 4 à 32 litres d'eau par kilogramme desdits textiles par rinçage.

10. Procédé selon la revendication 9, dans lequel lesdits textiles sont rincés avec de 5 à 10 litres d'eau par kilogramme desdits textiles par rinçage.

11. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 10, dans lequel lesdits textiles sont soumis à 2 ou 3 rinçages.

12. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 11, dans lequel la température de ladite liqueur de lavage est de 15°C à 70°C.

13. Procédé selon la revendication 12, dans lequel la température de la liqueur de lavage est de 25°C à 50°C.

14. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 13, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage contient de 0,04% à 1,5% en poids de tensioactifs détergents.

15. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 14, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage contient de 0,15% à 1% en poids de tensioactifs détergents et de 0,1% à 5% en poids d'adjuvant de détergence.

16. Procédé selon la revendication 15, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage contient de 1 gramme à 45 grammes, par kilogramme de ladite charge de lavage, dudit tensioactif détergent et de 10 grammes à 50 grammes, par kilogramme de ladite charge de lavage, dudit adjuvant de détergence.

17. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 16, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage comprend en outre de 0,05% à 0,2% en poids d'un agent de blanchiment qui est particulièrement efficace au-dessus de 55°C, et la température desdits textiles sur lesquels est distribuée la liqueur de lavage est d'au moins 60°C.

18. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 17, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage comprend en outre de 0,05% à 0,2% en poids d'un agent de blanchiment activé, ou d'un agent de blanchiment efficace au-dessous de 50°C, et dans lequel la température desdits textiles sur lesquels est distribuée la liqueur de lavage est de 25° à 50°C.

19. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 18, dans lequel ladite liqueur de lavage comprend en outre jusqu'à 0,15% en poids d'une enzyme.

20. Dispositif de blanchissage utilisable pour mettre en oeuvre le procédé de la revendication 1, comprenant un tambour (40) rotatif autour d'un axe horizontal et contenant une pluralité de pales de soulèvement (47), ledit tambour étant adapté pour retenir les textiles salis pendant le blanchissage, un dispositif (80—82, 88—89, 91—94, 101, 195 et 106) pour produire une liqueur de lavage aqueuse, un dispositif (84—87, 95) pour appliquer la totalité de ladite liqueur de lavage, sous forme finement divisée, sur lesdits textiles salis, un dispositif (83, 110, 120) pour appliquer de l'eau de rinçage auxdits textiles lavés, ledit tambour rotatif (40) étant perméable à l'humidité et étant monté au sein d'une enceinte stationnaire (15) imperméable à l'humidité, ladite enceinte stationnaire comprenant un dispositif (21, 140, 142) servant à retirer simultanément ladite liqueur de lavage concentrée, lesdites salissures et ladite liqueur de rinçage dudit tambour perméable à l'humidité; et ledit tambour perméable à l'humidité (40) étant raccordé à un moteur d'entraînement (60) conçu pour communiquer une énergie mécanique aux textiles en cours de blanchissage, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif servant à appliquer la liqueur de lavage comprend un dispositif de pulvérisation (106) et en ce que le tambour est muni d'un dispositif de régulation de la vitesse (27, 28, 38) conçu pour faire tourner le tambour (40), pendant l'application de la liqueur de lavage, à une vitesse inférieure à celle qui est suffisante pour surmonter les forces de la pesanteur s'exerçant sur les textiles salis, pour soulever les textiles jusqu'à une hauteur, dans le tambour, telle que des textiles puissent tomber sous l'action de la pesanteur devant le dispositif de pulvérisation.

21. Dispositif de blanchissage selon la revendication 20, comprenant un dispositif (160, 161, 164) pour appliquer de l'énergie thermique aux textiles contenant de la liqueur de lavage logés dans ledit tambour perméable à l'humidité.

22. Dispositif de blanchissage selon la revendication 21, dans lequel ledit dispositif pour appliquer de l'énergie thermique auxdits textiles contenant de la liqueur de lavage comprend un système à circulation d'air en circuit fermé comprenant un dispositif de chauffage (165) et un dispositif de manœuvre (163, 166, 167, 172), les extrémités opposées (180, 190) dudit système en circuit fermé étant raccordées audit tambour stationnaire (15), ce qui force l'air recyclé dans ledit système à passer en continu à travers le tambour mobile (40) perméable à l'humidité et les textiles qui y sont contenus.

23. Dispositif de blanchissage selon la revendication 22, comprenant un dispositif (168, 169, 170, 171) permettant de relier à l'atmosphère ledit système en circuit fermé, grâce auquel de l'air atmosphérique non chauffé est aspiré dans ledit système à l'aide dudit dispositif de manœuvre de l'air, envoyé sur ledit dispositif de chauffage, forcé pour pénétrer dans ladite enceinte perméable à l'humidité, envoyé à travers lesdits textiles et évacué vers l'atmosphère.



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24. Dispositif de blanchissage selon la revendication 23, dans lequel ledit dispositif servant à mettre à l'atmosphère ledit système en circuit fermé comprend une soupape de dérivation (168), ledit dispositif de blanchissage pouvant ainsi être employé pour sécher thermiquement les textiles blanchis contenus dans ladite enceinte perméable à l'humidité.

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