Cleanroom Garment Silicone Contamination

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• Background
  – GSFC
    • Facilities
    • Hardware
  – Why silicones are bad
  – Cleanroom Garments

• Actions Taken

• Lessons Learned

• Results

• Questions
Background

- Facilities
  - SSDIF
  - Others

- Projects
  - HST
  - WFC Build Up
  - New Horizons
  - STereo Exploration of Regolith and Exospheres (STEREO)
  - James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)
Background

• Why silicones are bad
  – Creeping
  – Outgassing
  – Removal
Background

- Particle contamination Impact
- Molecular contamination impact
Background

- Type of garments we rent & number
- Distribution Process
- Gowning procedure
Background

- Cleanroom garment vendor was changed in December 2004

- In mid March 2005 one customer's off handed remark about an odor on the cleanroom garments prompted a rinse request

- Silicones have no odor, request was an effort to be difficult?

- Without any previous experience sampling garments, a random rinse of the material was performed

- Consulted materials branch at GSFC for procedure

- Additional rinses showed silicone

- "Crude" transfer test was performed also showing silicone
Actions Taken

Meetings were initiated with GSFC’s Contamination Engineering Group and other interested parties
  • Twice daily with 20-30 participants

2-3 different cleaning procedures were suggested by the laundry company but none proved successful
4 washes
Orange Cleaner
Dry Cleaning

10% of each batch of cleaned garments were rinsed
  • Acceptable levels were undetermined

Garments were removed from facilities except DDL (no concern for silicone contamination)
  • Signs posted warning of the issue

Samples of gowning rooms and other areas possibly contaminated were taken
  • No evidence of contamination by garments
Additional Actions

• Other initiatives pursued
  – Samples from other converters and laundries were requested and tested
  – Industry expert was put under contract
  – Disposable garments secured and tested
    • ESD Characteristics were in question
    • Other contaminants/residuals may be of concern
  – Old COG garments tested negative for silicone and put into service
Continuing Actions

• As efforts continued
  – Small group of team members visited laundry looking for issues with their process and “smoking gun”
  – Work instruction to standardize sampling was initiated
  – Smaller “Tiger Team” was identified to facilitate process and decisions
  – Dry clean wash suggested and results were promising
  – 10% of 2 batches were tested and results negative
  – Last batch of 10% all were positive
Turning Point (5/23/05)

- All new, silicone free garments were requested from laundry service
- Samples from our laundry company’s in house stock and other converters were tested
- ESD requirements were addressed
- “Tiger Team” concluded with identification of garments from an acceptable vendor that met silicone and ESD tests.
- On-site audit was conducted at converter with laundry service to observe process
- We have a verification procedure
- Last batch of booties were positive
Lessons Learned

• Investigation teams should be established with 6-8 members
  – Initial meetings with 20-30 members were difficult to manage
  – Comments and concerns from others in the organization should be funneled through team members
  – Members of the team should be from appropriate organizations
Lessons Learned (cont.)

• Never Checked transfer test to very level B
Lessons Learned (cont.)

• Ask the experts
  – We took the lead to investigate this matter and too many attempts were made to clean the garments at our request and direction
  – Laundry and industry expert advice and involvement is key and must be kept up
Lessons Learned (cont.)

• Sampling & cleaning plans & protocols should be established in a methodical and controlled manner and the capacity of the testing facilities assessed objectively
  – Facility cleaning procedure was ready for implementation when new information required a procedure rewrite
  – Standard sampling plan was not developed and implemented until well into the investigation process
  – Laboratory that normally processed 2-3 samples per day went to more than 20 per day overnight, without the infrastructure for the increase
Lessons Learned (cont.)

• Silicone issues in laundry were not well known at GSFC and in aerospace industry
  – Appears to be well known in other industries such as disk manufacturing
Lessons Learned (cont.)

- Establish limits
  - Only one project CC manager established an acceptable limit
  - Our criteria is "undetectable by FTIR"
Lessons Learned (cont.)

• Be prepared to examine all aspects associated with the initial problem
  – Disposable garments were not approved for use in ESD sensitive areas
  – ESD testing of proposed replacements had to be initiated
  – COG garments found unacceptable for ESD while more in depth testing of disposables revealed they were acceptable
  – Disposables had other contaminants such as DOP
Lessons Learned (cont.)

• Silicones are ubiquitous!
  – Hair gel, skin lotions, “Return to Flight” & other charitable organization wrist bands
  – Some adhesives and materials used on flight hardware
  – In consumables
Results

- Awareness of silicone issues in laundry and in other aspects of hardware processing was raised at GSFC
- Infrastructure and support of testing lab will be increased
- Protocol to verify garments at different stages will be instituted: from converter, during laundering, and upon arrival at GSFC
- Closer work with laundry and converter will result from the monitoring
Results

• Specification for laundry services and garments will be strengthened, including not only silicone contamination, but ESD as well as particulate generation

• All consumables will be tested for NVR before use in GSFC cleanrooms, including gloves, wipes, solvents, etc.

• Silicone found on face masks, we had a process to deal with them and it worked.
Questions