

Tech Tips: Velour Mysteries Solved

Submitted for publication to Mobile Tech News June 2006

I was asked a question by another repair technician:

"Why do my velour repairs wear out so fast?" So I asked him, "How do you do your velour repairs?" He responded, "I just stick some glue in the hole, and put some matching velour fiber on top and that's it."

I queried, "Even if it's all the way through the fabric and into the foam?" He replied "Well, yeah, the fabric is glued to the foam so you can't put a sub-patch beneath it." I told him, "I think I know what your problem is!"

Here's his problem and the solution. We assume in this example that he has cleaned and prepped the fabric properly. Imagine that the fabric itself is about 1/16th of an inch thick. The foam that it is glued onto is about 1/2 of an inch thick. When he puts the glue into the hole, it soaks into the fabric and down into the foam. Because the foam is so absorbent, it actually sucks the glue into the foam and ends up not entirely filling the hole, in fact most of the glue actually went into the foam instead of the hole. But you can't see this phenomenon while the glue is still wet.

Of course after he fills the hole with the glue, he immediately applies the velour fibers. What he doesn't know is that when the glue dries it turns into a hard "lump" inside the foam, leaving the hole almost empty, with a layer of velour fibers on top. This lump is about the thickness of the foam, or about 1/2 of an inch.

Another thing that has occurred is that the water or solvent has evaporated from the glue, also causing the glue to shrink and there not being as much glue in the hole as you first thought. (Note: solvent based glues shrink less than water based glues.) As it dries and the glue starts to soak into the foam, and the water or solvent starts to evaporate, the repair will start to sink in or turn into a concave spot so that right where the repair was it will look like a little "bowl". So now you have a little concave spot with a hard 1/2 inch marble like knot of glue underneath. Around the concave spot is a hard edge. When the customer starts rubbing against this edge, the velour wears off very quickly.

It's the same concept as when you have buttons on a seat. If you are always rubbing against the seat and the buttons, the fabric on the buttons will wear off first because it's not nice and soft like the foam.

To prevent this from happening: Fill in the area where the foam is with Dacron. Dacron is basically what they use to stuff pillows, and you can purchase it at any fabric store. Push it into the hole until it is the same density as the foam. Use your fingers (almost like Braille) and feel the hole to make sure that you don't feel the hole anymore or to make sure that you don't have too much Dacron which can create a lump. Then apply a small amount of glue on top of the Dacron and then apply the velour fibers. By doing this you have simulated the same thickness and density of the original foam, so the repair should wear much better. Continue to cosmetically finish as usual.

Fabric repairs when done on high wear areas will still not wear as well as the original fabric. However, this method makes the repair last much longer. Problem solved!

-end-