

How to Clean and Re-Proof DWR Work Clothing

Work 'n More Gear Care Guide | Updated 2025 | worknmore.com

Most work clothing doesn't come with a waterproof membrane. But a lot of it — softshells, hi-vis jackets, fleeces, work hoodies — is treated with DWR, a water-repellent coating that sheds light rain, slows wind penetration, and keeps fabric from getting heavy and waterlogged in wet conditions.

DWR on clothing works degrades over time, and regular detergents speed up that process. The right wash and a periodic re-proof will restore performance and extend the life of the gear considerably.

This guide covers what DWR does on clothing, why it fails, how to restore it using Grangers Performance Wash, Clothing Repel, and Wash+Repel Clothing 2 in 1, and which types of work clothing benefit most from this kind of care.

What DWR Does on Work Clothing

DWR — Durable Water Repellent — is a treatment applied to the outer surface of fabric that causes water to bead up and roll off rather than soak in. On standard work clothing DWR does something simpler but still valuable: it keeps the fabric dry.

When the face fabric of a softshell or work jacket stays dry, a few things happen. The garment stays lighter. It retains more insulating value. It dries faster when you step inside. And it continues to shed light rain and drizzle without feeling heavy or cold.

When DWR breaks down and the fabric wets out, all of that reverses. A saturated work jacket can feel significantly heavier, loses much of its wind resistance, and takes a long time to dry. The fabric itself isn't damaged, but the performance is gone until the DWR is restored.

Which Work Clothing Benefits from DWR Care

Not every piece of workwear has a DWR coating, and not every piece needs re-proofing. The table below covers the types of clothing where DWR care makes a real difference.

Clothing Type	Why DWR Matters	Grangers Approach
Softshell jacket	Stretch face fabric is DWR-treated to shed light rain and wind	Performance Wash + Clothing Repel
Hi-vis workwear	DWR keeps fabric light and dry; wet fabric reduces visibility and warmth	Performance Wash + Clothing Repel
Work jacket / hoodie	Face fabric DWR sheds light moisture and reduces wind penetration	Performance Wash + Clothing Repel
Fleece midlayer	DWR on face keeps loft and warmth when worn as an outer layer	Performance Wash + Clothing Repel

If you're unsure whether a garment has DWR, sprinkle a few drops of water on the surface. If they bead up and roll off, DWR is present. If they soak in immediately, the garment either has no DWR or the coating has fully degraded.

Why Standard Detergents Break Down DWR

Standard laundry detergents are engineered to clean cotton and synthetic clothing by lifting oils and particles from fibers. They do this effectively — but they also leave behind surfactant residue that coats fabric fibers and degrades DWR.

Fabric softener is particularly damaging. It works by coating fiber surfaces to reduce friction and static, which is exactly what makes DWR stop functioning. Even residual softener in a shared washing machine can affect a DWR-treated garment.

The result of repeated washing with standard detergent isn't just reduced DWR — it's also residue buildup that can make fabric feel stiff, reduce breathability, and shorten the overall life of the garment. A detergent designed for technical clothing avoids all of this.

Washing DWR Work Clothing: Grangers Performance Wash

Grangers Performance Wash is formulated for technical and DWR-treated garments. It cleans thoroughly without stripping the coating or leaving residue that degrades fabric performance. It's safe for softshells, hi-vis polyester, fleece, and treated cotton blends — and unlike standard detergents, it won't accelerate the breakdown of the DWR you're trying to preserve.

How to Wash

1. Turn garments inside out if the care label recommends it, particularly for hi-vis clothing where the reflective tape can be sensitive to abrasion.
2. Close zippers and hook-and-loop fasteners to prevent snagging.
3. Machine wash on a warm, gentle cycle. Check the care label for temperature limits — hi-vis workwear in particular may have specific requirements to maintain ANSI compliance.
4. Add Grangers Performance Wash at the dosage on the bottle. No fabric softener, no bleach, no other detergents.
5. Run an extra rinse cycle to flush out any remaining residue.
6. Tumble dry on low heat or hang dry. Low heat helps reactivate any residual DWR on the fabric surface.

Hi-vis garments: a note on washing

Always check the care label on hi-vis workwear before washing. ANSI/ISEA 107 compliant garments have specific wash limits and temperature restrictions tied to maintaining fluorescent background material performance and reflective tape integrity. Grangers Performance Wash is safe for hi-vis fabrics, but exceeding wash temperature limits is not.

Restoring DWR: Grangers Clothing Repel

Washing with Performance Wash — followed by low-heat drying — will often reactivate residual DWR on garments that haven't fully degraded. But once the coating itself has worn through, you need to re-proof. That's what Grangers Clothing Repel is for.

Clothing Repel is a wash-in DWR treatment — it goes into the washing machine, not onto the garment by hand. This makes application straightforward and ensures even coverage across every surface of the fabric, including seams, pockets, and collar areas that a hand-applied treatment can miss. Like all Grangers products, it's PFC-free and bonds to fabric fibers under heat for durable, wash-resistant water repellency.

How to Re-Proof with Grangers Clothing Repel

1. Wash the garment first with Grangers Performance Wash to remove dirt, oils, and residue. Re-proofing a contaminated garment reduces adhesion and effectiveness.
2. Run a second machine cycle using Grangers Clothing Repel at the dosage on the bottle. No other detergent — the Repel goes in alone.
3. Use a warm, gentle cycle. The same temperature settings as the wash cycle work well.
4. Tumble dry on low heat for 20 minutes, or iron on a low setting with a pressing cloth. Heat activates the DWR and bonds it to the fiber surface.
5. Allow the garment to cool fully, then test by sprinkling water on the surface. It should bead up immediately and roll off cleanly.

Quick test: is it working?

After re-proofing and cooling, put a few drops of water on the treated surface. If they bead up and roll off within a second or two, the DWR is active. If they sit on the surface without rolling off, run the garment through a low dryer cycle again — the treatment may just need more heat to fully activate.

The One-Step Option: Grangers Wash+Repel Clothing 2 in 1

If your gear needs both cleaning and re-proofing — which is most of the time — Grangers Wash+Repel Clothing 2 in 1 combines both steps into a single wash cycle. It cleans the fabric and deposits a fresh DWR coating at the same time, cutting the process in half.

It's the practical choice for regular maintenance. Instead of running two separate machine cycles, one wash with the 2-in-1 product handles both jobs. Like the individual products, it's PFC-free and safe for softshells, hi-vis polyester, fleece, and treated work fabrics.

When to Use Each Product

- Use Grangers Performance Wash alone when the garment is dirty but DWR is still functioning — you want a clean without disturbing what's still working.
- Use Grangers Clothing Repel after washing when DWR has significantly degraded and washing alone hasn't restored beading.
- Use Grangers Wash+Repel Clothing 2 in 1 for routine maintenance washes when the garment likely needs both — the most convenient option for regular upkeep.

How Often to Wash and Re-Proof

There's no fixed schedule — it depends on how hard the garment is being used. These are the signals to watch for.

- Wash when the garment has visible soiling, persistent odor, or when water is no longer beading off the surface.
- Tumble dry on low after washing. This often reactivates residual DWR without any additional re-proofing.
- Re-proof when washing and drying no longer restore water beading — the coating itself has worn through.
- For workers in heavy outdoor use, that may mean washing every few weeks during wet season and re-proofing a few times per year.
- Garments that spend most of their time as a mid-layer under a shell will need less frequent re-proofing than those worn as an outer layer in rain.

Why Grangers

Grangers has been developing technical fabric care chemistry since 1937. Their clothing care range — Performance Wash, Clothing Repel, and Wash+Repel Clothing 2 in 1 — is formulated specifically for DWR-treated workwear and active clothing, not adapted from general household fabric care chemistry.

All three products are PFC-free. As brands including Carhartt, Helly Hansen, and Portwest move toward fluorine-free DWR treatments in their manufacturing, using a PFC-free re-proofer keeps your maintenance consistent with the original fabric chemistry and ahead of tightening environmental regulations around fluorinated compounds.

The practical case is simple: Performance Wash cleans without degrading what's already working, Clothing Repel restores it when it's worn through, and Wash+Repel 2 in 1 handles both in a single step. Straightforward application, and results you can test with a cup of water.

DWR-Treated Workwear Brands We Carry

Work 'n More stocks DWR-treated jackets, softshells, hi-vis outerwear, and fleece from brands that hold up in the field.

- **Carhartt** Rain Defender treated jackets, hoodies, and bibs use a DWR coating that responds well to proper care and periodic re-proofing.
- **Helly Hansen** Workwear and outdoor jackets across their lineup use DWR treatments — including on non-membrane garments designed for layering and light weather protection.
- **Portwest** Softshells, fleeces, and hi-vis outerwear with DWR treatments suited to industrial and construction environments.
- **Radians** Hi-vis Class 2 and Class 3 jackets and vests with DWR-treated face fabrics. Proper care maintains fluorescent material performance and extends replacement cycles.
- **Grundéns** Select Grundéns mid-layers and lighter jackets are DWR treated for use under or over their heavier marine outerwear.

Not sure whether your gear needs a wash, a re-proof, or both? Bring it in — our staff can take a look and point you toward the right Grangers product. Stop in at any of our Washington locations or browse the full selection at worknmore.com.

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