POLYETHYLENE TARP

Here’s a description of the polyethylene material used in the manufacture of polytarps from KAPS TEX CO., LTD, a woman-owned, green manufacturing company in China that is one of the largest polytarp producers in the world. Polyethylene is also used to make the “Bagster,” a Waste Management Co. product sold at Home Depot that holds up to 3300 lbs. of construction debris. In its heavier forms, polyethylene is plenty tough and durable for use as sails requiring a force of over 96 lb./sq**. in**. to over 100 lb./sq. **in**. to stretch to failure according to five separate tensile strength tests at a Goretex manufacturing facility. (For comparison purposes, 1lb./sq. **ft**. is the pressure on a sail at Force 6 on the Beaufort Scale [strong breeze of 25-31 mph]). Besides its lower cost and chemical makeup, polytarp differs from Dacron and other sail materials in being less stiff and more resilient. Its resiliency allows it to stretch under load in certain ways that are conducive to making sails from a single large sheet of material, instead of having to arrange strips of the same material in panels in order to shape it. Is polyethylene tarp sailcloth? Probably not, but what sail material is sail “cloth” today? Most sail materials today are made from some form of oil-based woven or laminated polymers such as polyester, nylon, or now, polyethylene.

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