**CLOSET SHELF DUST PROTECTION SYSTEM**

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**ABSTRACT**

A dust shield system which prevents dust from settling on clothing and other stored items without interfering with access to, or visibility of, garments and other items stored in a closet. The dust shield is removably attachable to a closet shelf and has an overhang which is sized to obstruct dust from settling on the shoulders of garments while allowing lateral access to, and visibility of, garments and other items without interference from the shield. Multiple overlapping shields having a standard size can be used to form an effective shield of any length. Alternatively custom shields can be made from a single length of shield material. Attachment directly to the garment shelf allows installation without detachment or alteration of the shelf. The dust shields can be made from decorative material, or transparent material to allow easy viewing of stored items. Other alternative embodiments allow shields to be used in conjunction with non-garment shelving.
CLOSET SHELF DUST PROTECTION SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Technical Field

[0002] The present invention relates to a shelf covering system which reduces dust accumulation on the top edges of garments while simultaneously allowing easy access to, and visibility of, garments suspended from shelving. The invention is also related to methods of attaching the shelf coverings to closet shelves, and to systems which protect both garment shelves which hang garments and garment shelves which protect shelving used to hold small items.

[0003] 2. Background Art

[0004] Dust accumulation on garments is a common problem. Especially when a garment remains untouched in a closet for longer periods of time. In particular, dust floating in the air in a closet will tend to settle to its relative weight when suspended in the air. This downward settling process results in a substantial portion of the settling dust coming to rest on the surfaces of garments which face upward. Namely, the shoulders and collars of garments. The lower portions of the garments tend to receive a much smaller accumulation of dust.

[0005] There have been a number of prior art attempts to reduce dust accumulation on garments. One such attempt has been to use a scalable garment bag for each individual garment. This provides good protection for the garment, but at the same time, it is inconvenient because it reduces visibility of the garments in a closet when an individual is searching for a particular garment. The use of garment bags for each garment is also relatively expensive. Furthermore, it is also inconvenient to have to remove garments from a garment bag. It would be desirable to have a garment protection system which stores garments in a reduced chance of dust buildup without the inconvenience of having to individually seal each garment independently, and without the expense and visibility problems associated with individual garment bags.

[0006] Another prior art attempt to avoid the dust problem has been through the use of structures which shield multiple garments simultaneously. This type of device generally takes one of two forms. The first is a freestanding tent-like structure which can be set up within a closet or elsewhere. This type of device is useful as a temporary structure, but is too large and unwieldy for use in any but the largest closets. A second structure has been the use of what would be described as an extended garment bag designed to simultaneously enclose two or more garments. This type of device also protects garments well, but is even less convenient than individual garment bags because the garments are difficult to see, and because the garments are difficult to retrieve from the garment bag. It would be desirable to protect garments from dust accumulation while maintaining visibility and having easy access to garments when both removing and storing the garments.

[0007] Another prior art attempt to protect garments has been through the use of retractable covers, similar in structure to retractable window shades which roll up to an open position and roll down to a closed position. This type of device protects garments from dust accumulation, but has several drawbacks. For example, they are expensive to purchase, and often would require custom fabrication due to closet shelf size variations. They would also typically require installation by a skilled workman. Further, the user would have to be careful to keep the outer surface of the shade clean. Otherwise, the dust from the outer surface would come in contact with the inner surface when in the open position. Thereafter, when the shade was returned to the closed position, it would deposit dust from the inner surface onto the garments, thereby defeating its purpose. It would be desirable to have a method of protecting garments from dust which does not require custom fabrication of skilled labor to install, or unnecessary care during ordinary use.

[0008] Another attempt to reduce dust contamination has been to use flexible sheets to protect the garments in a closet. These sheets are typically attached to a rear wall, or held between a rear wall and a shelf. They extend over the front edge of the shelf and downward for the length of a typical garment, and sometimes approach floor level. The devices also provide dust protection, but have several drawbacks. First, they obstruct visibility since they block a direct view of the entire garment. Second, due to their long length, they must have multiple slits to allow access to the garments behind them. The multiple slits make it more difficult to clean and create an unsightly appearance. Further, the extended length adds significantly to their weight. In turn, their weight requires care in installation, which normally results in the flexible sheets being secured in place by decorating the shelf from the wall and then resecuring the shelf to the wall with the flexible sheet secured therebetween. Typically, the removal and reinstallation of the shelving would require skilled labor. It would be desirable to have a garment shield that was relatively light weight, which can be installed without doing anything to the shelving or to the closet walls, and which can be installed as a do-it-yourself project.

[0009] Yet another prior art device is solid shelf covers which fit over open shelving (which can be fabricated as open wire shelves, or slatted shelves fabricated from wood, metal, plastic, etc.), and which are commonly available from a variety of commercial sources. Solid shelf covers are designed to allow a user to place small items on open shelves which would otherwise fall over or fall through a conventional open shelf. These solid shelf covers provide limited protection, but because they do not extend downward to the shoulders of the garments suspended below, the dust in the air enters from the side as it settles and at least one side of the garment is subject to dust accumulation. It would be desirable to have a method of providing a continuous shelf cover which also prevents dust from accumulating on garments.

[0010] While addressing the basic need for protecting garments from dust accumulation, the prior art has failed to provide a dust shield which blocks dust from settling from above, which blocks dust from settling on the shoulders of garments laterally, but does not obstruct either the visibility of the garments, access to the garments during removal, or access to the hanger rod during replacement.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] The present invention solves the foregoing problems by providing a system of dust shields which allow
access to garments and other items stored in a closet, and which provide a dust shield to prevent dust from settling on clothing and other stored items. The shield is removably attachable to a closet shelf and has an overhang sized to allow lateral access to garments and other items without interference from the shield. Multiple overlapping shields having a standard size can be used to form an effective shield of any length. Attachment directly to the garment shelf allows installation or removal of the dust shield without detachment or alteration of the shelf. Alternatively custom shields can be made from a single length of shield material. The shields can be made from decorative material, or transparent material to allow easy viewing of stored items. Other alternative embodiments allow shields to be used in conjunction with non-garment shelving.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the dust shield attached to a conventional wire shelf.

[0013] FIG. 2 shows a preferred embodiment of the dust shield which illustrates how it is attached to the distal edge of a conventional wire shelf.

[0014] FIG. 3 is a close-up view of the hook and loop tie which is inserted through an aperture in the dust shield to secure it to a conventional wire shelf.

[0015] FIG. 4 is a front view of an alternative preferred embodiment of the dust shield which illustrates its installation on a solid shelf system.

[0016] FIG. 5 is a front perspective view of an alternative preferred embodiment of the dust shield which illustrates its installation on a divided solid shelf system.

[0017] FIG. 6 is a front view of an alternative preferred embodiment which implements the dust shield on shelving used for folded garments and other items.

[0018] FIG. 7 is an alternative preferred embodiment which illustrates a dust shield system which combines the dust shield used for garments with dust shields used for non-garment shelving.

[0019] FIG. 8 is an alternative preferred embodiment in which multiple dust shields are secured side-by-side to form an extended length dust shield which does not overlap.

[0020] FIG. 9 is an end view of an alternative preferred embodiment in which the dust shield is suspended above a hanger rod without an upper shelf.

[0021] FIG. 10 is an end view of an alternative preferred embodiment in which the dust shield is suspended above a hanger rod with a sleeve that fits over a support rod.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0022] Prior to detailed description of the figures, a general overview of the features and advantages of the invention will be presented. Individuals store most of their wardrobe in closets which suspend individual garments from hangers. A substantial problem which is created by this type of storage is the dust on the top edge of the garments which accumulates over time. Most of the dust accumulates on the upper edges of the garments because the dust is heavier than the air and tends to fall downward onto the garments. In most closets, there is a substantial amount of dust floating in the air. This dust floats above the clothing and eventually settles in a downward direction toward the clothing. Over time a substantial amount of dust accumulates on the top edge of garments. The dust shield provides a barrier between the garments and the settling dust which prevents a substantial amount of dust from accumulating on those garments.

[0023] In the preferred embodiments, the dust shield is attached directly to the shelf. This provides easy installation by the user who can install the dust shield as a do-it-yourself project, and eliminates the work associated with prior art devices which require removal of shelving to secure their dust covering devices to the wall, or to secure their dust covering devices to other surfaces in the closet. By securing the dust cover directly to the shelf, it allows an individual to remove the dust cover for any reason with a minimum amount of difficulty and with no damage to the walls.

[0024] The preferred embodiments are designed to take advantage of the fact that dust accumulation occurs primarily in the area of the shoulders and upper portions of a garment. Due to this, the dust shield can be constructed in such a way that it provides minimal obstruction to access to garments by an individual. By extending the dust shield to the approximate level of the shoulders of the garment, most of the dust accumulation is eliminated, the individual can clearly see all of the garments, and lateral access to the garments is maximized because the individual does not have to move the dust shield out of the way to access a garment.

[0025] In the preferred embodiment, the dust shield is fabricated from flexible transparent material (for example, vinyl) to provide an individual with the ability to see any garments which are suspended from the shelf rod, and also to see the hanger hook which attaches the garment hanger to the shelf rod. This allows the individual to more easily disengage the hanger from the shelf rod. Of course, those skilled in the art will recognize that the material used to fabricate the dust shield can be any material suitable for its purpose and may in fact be a decorative cloth material. However, the use of non-transparent material does create a disadvantage in that the hanger cannot be as easily observed when disengaging it from the shelf rod or hanging it on the shelf rod.

[0026] The dust shield provides for easy direct attachment to a wire shelf by providing a series of apertures along the distal end of the dust shield which allow the dust shield to be secured to the shelf with easily attached ties. The ties are merely inserted through the apertures, wrapped around the distal edge of the shelf and secured to themselves. In the preferred embodiment, the ties are fabricated from narrow strips of hook and loop material. However, those skilled in the art will recognize that any suitable tie may be used including wire ties, plastic locking ties, fabric ties, etc. An alternate preferred embodiment allows a strip fabricated from hook and loop material to be secured at one end to the lower surface of the dust shield with an opposite end extending beyond the edge of the dust shield so that it can be wrapped around the rear edge of the closet shelf and folded back to allow the ends of the hook and loop material to be mated together. This eliminates the need for the apertures in the previous embodiment.

[0027] Wire shelving is normally used to describe a particular type of open wire shelving which is commercially
available. However, as used herein, the term “wire shelf” is intended to mean not only commonly available wire shelving, but also any other type of open shelving which may be an inexpensive metal shelving, custom-made wood shelving, or any type of open shelving fabricated from a variety of materials such as plastics, PVC composites, etc., and which may be slotted or perforated.

[0028] This invention also provides an improvement over prior art dust shields in that the short vertical extension required to reach the shoulder of a garment means that the dust shield can be custom made in a single continuous sheet which provides better dust protection and better aesthetic appeal. Of course, dust shields having a standard size can be manufactured such that economical standard size shields can be used in conjunction with one another to provide dust protection for any length of shelf. Due to the extended vertical length of prior art covers, the covers typically required multiple slits to allow access to the garments. In addition, the extended length also interfered with viewing of the garments, and with attachment and removal of garments from the shelf rod.

[0029] In addition to the use of the dust shield in conjunction with conventional wire shelving, the invention can also be used with solid shelving such as that often made from wood. In this embodiment, the surface of the shelf can be any solid material, and therefore, the dust shield does not have to be extended across the upper surface of the shelf. Instead, a shorter dust shield can be used which extends from the proximal edge of the shelf downward such that it extends approximately to the shoulder of garments hung from the closet shelf. In this embodiment, the dust shield is attached directly to the proximal edge of the shelf or front panel. Further, it is attached to the shelf by any suitable means including, but not limited to, hook and loop material, adhesive, hooks, staples, screws, nails, etc.

[0030] In addition to shelves which support hanging garments, alternative embodiments include smaller dust shields designed to be used in conjunction with smaller shelves which hold items rather than garment hangers. Both the large and small dust shields can be used in conjunction with one another as a system to protect a variety of items within a closet or storage structure.

[0031] A variety of embodiments are possible when implementing this invention. For example, the invention can be implemented by substantially square or rectangular shaped dust shields that shield multiple hanging garments from dust accumulation in closets that use the laminated-wire hanging rods and shelving, or hanging rods with solid shelving above it, or combinations thereof. To protect garments using this type of structure, a dust shield will be secured such that it lies on top of the shelving and extends downward over the edge to cover the hangers and the upper portions of hanging garments, preferably to at least the shoulder of the garment. The dust shield can be manufactured with a plurality of grommets sized such that a flexible tie can fit through it to secure it to the distal edge of the shelf adjacent to the wall. In the case of shelving fabricated from wood or other material capable of accepting a screw, a screw can be inserted through the grommet and screwed into the shelving material to secure the dust shield to the shelf. Alternatively, the dust panel can be screwed directly into the wall behind the shelving. Preferably, the dust cover is sized to drape properly over the garments held by the shelf rod. Any suitable method can be used to fashion the dust shield in place, including hook and loop material, snaps, buttons, screws, ties, hooks, adhesive tape, etc. We turn now to a more detailed discussion of the figures.

[0032] FIG. 1 shows a preferred embodiment of the dust shield 1 which is designed to be attached to a conventional wire shelf 4. In this figure, the wire shelf 4 has a distal edge 5 and a proximal edge 6. Likewise, the dust shield 1 has a distal edge 3 and a proximal edge 2. The garments 7 are suspended from the bottom of the wire shelf 4 by conventional hangers 8. The distal edge 3 of the dust shield 1 is secured to the wire shelf 4 at or near its distal edge 5. Once secured, it is draped over the top surface of the wire shelf 4 and extends in a downward direction until the proximal edge 2 passes the shoulders of the garments 7. By attaching the dust shield 1 to the wire shelf 4 in this manner, a shield is formed which prevents dust from falling on the garments 7 from above. Since most dust attaches to a garment 7 by falling on the top and shoulders of the garment 7, the dust shield 1 substantially reduces the total amount of dust which accumulates on the garment 7.

[0033] In this embodiment, the proximal edge 2 of the dust shield 1 is intended to extend approximately to the edge of the garment 7 shoulder, or slightly below as shown. By limiting the length of the dust shield 1 in this manner, the dust shield 1 does not interfere with hanging of garments 7 on the wire shelf 4, and does not interfere with removal of garments 7 from the wire shelf 4. A disadvantage associated with prior art attempts to reduce dust accumulation on garments 7 stored in closets has been the unnecessarily long length of garment dust covers which restrict access to the garments 7, thereby making it inconvenient to use.

[0034] This embodiment also illustrates a dust shield 1 being fabricated from transparent material. The transparent material allows the individual to see the location of the garment hanger and its support rod to facilitate placement and removal of the garment hangers 8. Of course, non-transparent material can be used for decorative purposes. However, the aforedescribed benefits of the transparent dust shield 1, in regard to placement and removal of garment hangers 8, would be reduced if the individual could not see through the dust shield 1. Also shown in this figure is a decorative trim which extends around the periphery of the dust shield 1 for aesthetic purposes. A useful option for the dust shield 1 is to include metal corner weights on the corners of the proximal edge 2 of the dust shield 1. These improve aesthetics by holding the dust shield 1 in a more taught configuration, and in addition, they improve aesthetics by hiding any seams in decorative trim. Of course, the invention will work with or without the decorative trim or the metal corner weights. Likewise, the dust shields 1 are shown as generally rectangular in shape. Of course, the shape can be modified for aesthetic reasons (e.g., providing a scalloped edge, etc.). Also shown in this figure is a second lower wire shelf 4 which also has a dust shield 1 attached to it.

[0035] Those skilled in the art will recognize that any suitable material can be used to fabricate the dust shield 1 so long as it accomplishes the goals of the invention. Likewise, those skilled in the art will recognize that a single continuous sheet of material can be used to fabricate a dust shield 1 as
a single piece. This provides the advantage of a simpler and more aesthetic appearance. However, the invention can also be implemented by multiple dust shields 1 which overlap one another. The advantage of using multiple dust shields 1 is that off-the-shelf dust shields 1, having a standard size and a lower cost, can be used in conjunction with one another to cover areas having a variety of sizes.

[0036] FIG. 2 is a top perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the invention which shows the dust shield 1 secured to the top of the wire shelf 4. In this embodiment, a series of apertures 10 are placed near the distal edge 3 of the dust shield 1. The distal edge 3 is also aligned with the distal edge 5 of the wire shelf 4. In this embodiment, flexible ties 9 are inserted through the apertures 10, then inserted through the wires that form the wire shelf 4 and then wrapped around the distal edge 3 of the dust shield 1 and the distal edge 5 of the wire shelf 4. The dust shield 1 is positioned such that when the flexible ties 9 are inserted through the apertures 10, they are also inserted behind the wires that comprise the distal edge 5 of the wire shelf 4. As a result, when the flexible ties 9 are secured together to form a loop, they encircle the wire at the distal edge 5 of the wire shelf 4 such that the distal edge 3 of the dust shield 1 and the distal edge 5 of the wire shelf 4 are secured together in substantial alignment with one another.

[0037] A significant benefit of this method of attachment is that the dust shield 1 can be attached to the wire shelf 4 without disturbing or moving the wire shelf 4 during installation. By installing in this manner, the dust shield 1 can be easily attached by an unskilled individual as a do-it-yourself project. Likewise, the dust shield 1 can be installed and/or removed without any tools. Prior art dust covers have failed to provide this type of easy installation.

[0038] Alternatively, it is also possible to attach the dust shield 1 to a bracket (not shown) that attaches to the wall adjacent to distal end of the shelf. This prevents any dust from entering adjacent to the distal end 3 of the dust shield 1, but it also requires skill to attach the bracket to the wall adjacent to the wire shelf 4. As a result, this embodiment loses some of the advantages provided by other embodiments because it requires skill and tools to install this manner. In addition, if a dust shield 1 installed in this manner is later removed, it may require repairing the wall it was attached to.

[0039] FIG. 3 is a close-up top perspective view of the dust shield 1 illustrated in FIG. 2. This figure more readily shows the aperture 10 and the flexible tie 9 securing a portion of the distal edge of the dust shield 1 to the wire shelf 4. In this embodiment, the aperture 10 is defined by a grommet. Those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be implemented without the grommet. However, the grommet will improve the durability of the dust shield 1 by reducing the possibility that the aperture 10 will tear. In addition, this figure illustrates a hook and loop tie 9. Those skilled in the art will recognize that any suitable material may be used to fabricate the tie 9, so long as it accomplishes the purposes of the invention.

[0040] In addition to flexible ties 9, it is also possible to use rigid clips (not shown) in place of the ties 9 to secure the dust shield 1 to the wire shelf 4. The only requirement is that the rigid clip be secured to the dust shield 1 and to the wire shelf 4 such that the dust shield 1 is securely held in position.

[0041] In FIG. 4, another alternative preferred embodiment is shown which illustrates how the dust shield 1 can be used in conjunction with solid shelving 11. The shelving can be fabricated from any suitable material, such as wood, particle board, metal, synthetics, etc. In this embodiment, the top shelf of the shelving is solid, and therefore the dust shield 1 does not have to extend across the top of the shelf. As shown in FIG. 4, the distal end 3 of the dust shield 1 is attached to the inside of the proximal edge of the solid shelf 11. Once secured, it extends downward past the shoulders of the garment. This acts to prevent dust accumulation in the same manner as was done in the previous embodiments.

[0042] The dust shield 1 can be attached to the proximal edge of the solid shelf 11 in any suitable manner. For example, hooks attached to the inside surface of the proximal end of solid shelf 11, or to the bottom surface of solid shelf 11, can be used by the apertures 10 to secure the dust shield 1. Likewise, a strip of hook and loop material can be used to secure the distal edge 3 of the dust shield 1 to the solid shelf 11. As was the case with previous embodiments, the shortened dust shield 1 will extend approximately to the shoulder of the garments 7, effectively preventing most of the dust accumulation on the garments 7. And as discussed above, the shortened length of the dust shield 1 does not restrict visibility of the garments 7 or access to the garments 7.

[0043] In FIG. 5, an alternative preferred embodiment is shown which illustrates a solid shelf 11 system having multiple compartments. Each compartment would have its own dust shield 1. Of course, the embodiments shown in FIGS. 4 and 5 can both be implemented by multiple overlapping dust shields 1 instead of a single dust shield 1.

[0044] Those skilled in the art will realize that instead of overlapping dust shields 1, the dust shields 1 can also be sized such that they are attached at their side edges to provide an extended length dust shield 1 which does not overlap.

[0045] FIG. 6 illustrates an alternative preferred embodiment which is used in conjunction with any shelving that supports folded garments or other items. In this embodiment, a dust shield 12 is attached at its distal edge 13 to the distal edge of the shelf. The dust shield 12 is sized such that it hangs down from the edge of the shelf and extends substantially the distance between its shelf and the next lower shelf. This embodiment allows closet shelving which is typically used to hold small items, and perhaps folded garments, to be kept dust free. This embodiment is also intended to use any of the attachment means used in the previous embodiments. As a result, the ease of installation provided by the previous embodiments is available in this embodiment. This allows the dust shields 12 to be easily installed in a pre-existing shelving system without requiring any adjustment to, or removal of, the pre-existing shelving.

[0046] In FIG. 7, another alternative embodiment is shown which uses a dust shield 1 in combination with dust shields 12 of various lengths to provide more complete dust protection for items stored within a closet. As can be seen from the figure, a variety of items, including folded garments, can be stored under dust shields 12 having various sizes. All of the dust shields 12 are attached in the same convenient manner described in the previous embodiments.
FIG. 8 illustrates an alternative preferred embodiment in which multiple dust shields 1 are secured together at their side edges to form an extended dust shield 1 which does not have overlapping panels. In this figure, apertures 10 on each side edge of the dust shield 1 are aligned with the side edge of the adjacent dust shield 1 such that they can be secured together via ties 9. For ease of illustration, the apertures 10 and associated ties 9 which are used to secure the dust shield 1 to the wire shelf 4 are not shown. Likewise, the optional grommets surrounding the apertures 10 are not shown. As was the case above, the ties 9 illustrate one method of securing the dust shields 1 together. Those skilled in the art will recognize that any suitable method can be used to secure adjacent dust shields 1 together, such as hook and loop material, rigid clips, adhesive, etc.

As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, a complete dust protection system is provided which reduces dust accumulation on items stored in a closet, while at the same time providing ease of installation without disturbing preexisting shelving, and easy access to garments 7 within the closet once the dust shields 1 are installed. The dust shield 1 provides many benefits. For example, allergic reactions which are caused by dust accumulation on clothing are reduced, and garments 7 protected in this manner are kept cleaner and fresher. The use of the dust shield 12 in conjunction with wire shelving 4 that holds small items makes the wire shelving 4 more usable because items stored on that wire shelf 4 are less likely to fall through or tip over. Since each single dust shield 12 protects multiple garments 7, rather than the single garment 7 protected by a conventional garment bag, it is more convenient and easier to use. Multiple dust shields 12 can be used for stacks of shelving rather than merely for garment 7 hanging. The garments 7 are clearly visible through the transparent dust shield 1. The garments 7 can be hung and removed with the ease. The dust shields 1 or 12 can be easily cleaned. Multiple dust shields 1 or 12 can overlap end to end, or be joined edge to edge, for additional coverage. As can be seen, the dust shields 1 and 12 taught herein provide many benefits to the user.

The method of attachment of the dust shields 1 and/ or 12 can vary based on the preferences of the user, and structure of the shelves. For wire shelving 4, the dust shields 1 and/or 12 can be attached to the top of the shelf and are secured using any suitable method, including ties, hook and loop material, adhesive, rigid clamps, brackets, screws, nails, etc. The portion of the dust shield 1 which extends downward from the shelf does not require any additional support and may or may not come in contact with the garments 7. When suspended from a solid shelving 11, the dust shield 1 can be attached to the front or rear of the fascia of the solid shelving 11. In addition, the dust shield 1 can be attached to an L-shaped bracket which can be used to attach the dust shield to the front or rear of the fascia.

In addition to the methods of attachment discussed above, the dust shield 1 can also be attached directly to the underside of the shelf (either a wire shelf 4 or a solid shelf 11). In this alternative embodiment, the distal portion of the dust shield 1 can vary widely and extend to the floor of the closet. The proximal portion of the dust shield 1 would extend to the shoulder of the garments 7, as discussed above. The method of attachment of the dust shield 1 to the bottom of the shelving can vary. For example, the dust shield 1 can be secured by the use of ties 9, hook and loop strips, rigid brackets, etc.

Another alternative embodiment uses opposing dust shields 1. The first dust shield 1 is draped over the distal side of the garments 7, and the second dust shield 1 is draped over the proximal side of the garments 7, forming a tent-like structure. In this configuration, the length of the first dust shield 1 is not critical and can vary widely. However, while to the length of the second dust shield 1 can vary, it would preferably be set approximately to the garment 7 shoulder to maintain the case of access to the garments 7 by the individual. This dual dust shield 1 configuration can be implemented by attachment of the dust shields 1 to the clothing rod, resting on the clothing rod, or to the bottom of the shelf. In the case where the opposing dust shields 1 are attached to the bottom of an open shelf, they can be secured via hook and loop ties to the wires or slats in the shelf such that the dust shields 1 form a tent-like structure that is substantially closed at the attachment point. The principal advantage associated with this configuration is that it is usable in the case where there is only a clothing rod, and no shelf above the clothing rod.

FIG. 9 illustrates an alternative embodiment for use in situations where there is no upper shelf. In this embodiment, a support rod 14 is secured above garment hanger rod 18 which is used to suspend garment hangars 19. A rear dust shield 16 is attached to a front dust shield 15 by ties 17. Ties 17 are also attached to support rod 14 such that once installed, dust shields 15 and 16 are held securely in position. Rear dust shield 16 would face the wall of the closet. As a result, it does not have to have any particular length. In this figure, it is shown as substantially longer than the front dust shield 15, but it does not have to be. As was the case with the previous embodiments, front dust shield 15 is limited in length to approximately the position of the garment hanger shoulder. This provides ease of access and visibility, while obstructing settling dust from falling on the tops of any garments suspended from a garment hanger 19.

FIG. 10 illustrates yet another preferred embodiment using a dust shield 1 which has a sleeve 20 that extends across the width of the dust shield 1. A support rod 14 is inserted into the sleeve 20 and then secured above the garment hanger rod 18. The support rod 14 would be attached to the closet walls in any convenient manner. Likewise, the sleeve 20 can be eliminated and the dust shield 1 can be attached to the support rod in any convenient manner (as shown in FIG. 9), such as hook and loop material, screws, etc. This embodiment also allows the dust shield 1 to be used in situations where there is no shelf.

While the invention has been described with respect to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit, scope, and teaching of the invention. For example, the material used to construct the dust shield, and attachment components may be anything suitable for their purpose, the size and shape of the dust shield can vary, etc. Accordingly, the invention herein disclosed is to be limited only as specified in the following claims.
I claim:
1. A dust shield system for use with shelving having an upper shelf with a distal edge and a proximal edge, and a lower garment hanging rod, comprising:
   at least one dust shield having a distal edge and a proximal edge;
   attachment means to attach the distal edge of the dust shield to the distal edge of the upper shelf; and
   the distal edge of the dust shield, when secured to the distal edge of the upper shelf, extending from approximately the distal edge of the upper shelf, past the proximal edge of the upper shelf, and downward such that the proximal edge of the dust shield ends approximately at the shoulder of garments suspended from the lower garment rod;
   whereby airborne dust settling in a downward direction is obstructed from reaching the top portions of garments by the dust shield.
2. A system, as in claim 1, further comprising:
   a plurality of ties;
   a plurality of apertures arranged near the distal edge of the dust shield, each aperture having a sufficient size to accommodate at least one tie; and
   the ties having a sufficient length such that when inserted through an aperture, it can be tied around a wire on the upper shelf to secure the distal edge of the dust shield to the distal edge of the upper shelf;
   whereby the distal edge of the upper shelf and the distal edge of the dust shield are secured together in substantial alignment.
3. A system, as in claim 2, wherein at least a portion of the ties are fabricated from hook and loop material.
4. A system, as in claim 1, further comprising:
   a plurality of clamps; and
   the clamps having a pressure such that when attached to a wire on the upper shelf and the distal edge of the dust shield, the distal edge of the dust shield is secured to the distal edge of the upper shelf;
   whereby the distal edge of the upper shelf and the distal edge of the dust shield are secured together in substantial alignment.
5. A system, as in claim 1, further comprising:
   at least one first section of hook and loop material for securing to an upper shelf;
   at least one second section of hook and loop material secured near the distal edge of the dust shield; and
   the first and second sections of hook and loop material, when secured together, having a sufficient strength to securely hold the distal edge of the dust shield in substantial alignment with the distal edge of the upper shelf;
   whereby the distal edge of the upper shelf and the distal edge of the dust shield are removably secured together in substantial alignment.
6. A system, as in claim 1, wherein the dust shield is comprised of one or more single panels.
7. A system, as in claim 6, wherein the dust shield is comprised of multiple panels which overlap and are secured together at their side edges.
8. A system, as in claim 1, further comprising:
   at least two shelves arranged one above the other; and
   at least one reduced size dust shield for attachment to the upper shelf, and having sufficient length to reach the approximate level of the lower shelf.
9. A system for obstructing dust from settling on the top surfaces of garments, comprising:
   a support rod for attachment above a garment hanger rod;
   at least one dust shield having a distal edge and a proximal edge; and
   attachment means to attach the dust shield to the support rod such that the proximal end of the dust shield reaches approximately to the shoulder of a garment suspended by a garment hanger attached to a garment hanger rod;
   whereby airborne dust settling in a downward direction is obstructed from reaching the top portions of garments by the dust shield.
10. A system, as in claim 9, wherein the attachment means further comprises:
   a plurality of apertures in the distal edge of the dust shield; and
   a plurality of ties, each tie sized to fit through the apertures, and further having a length suitable to allow it to be secured to the support rod.
11. A system, as in claim 9, wherein the attachment means further comprises:
   a sleeve formed in the dust shield, the sleeve having an internal diameter which is sufficient in size to allow a support rod to be inserted therethrough;
   whereby the dust shield is held in place by the support sleeve inserted through the sleeve.
12. A system, as in claim 9, wherein the attachment means further comprises at least one clamp having sufficient size to clamp the distal edge of the dust shield to the support rod;
   whereby the dust shield is attached to the support rod by the clamp.
13. A system, as in claim 9, wherein the attachment means further comprises at hook and loop material, the hook and loop material attached to the distal edge of the dust shield and having a corresponding section of hook and loop material to attach to the support rod;
   whereby the dust shield is attached to the support rod by the hook and loop material.
14. A system for obstructing dust from settling on the top surfaces of garments stored in closets having solid upper shelves, comprising:
   at least one dust shield having a distal edge and a proximal edge; and
   attachment means to attach the distal edge of the dust shield to the fascia of a closet such that the proximal end of the dust shield reaches approximately to the shoulder of a garment suspended by a garment hanger attached to a garment hanger rod in the closet;
whereby airborne dust settling in a downward direction is obstructed from reaching the top portions of garments by the dust shield.

15. A system, as in claim 14, wherein the dust shield attaches to the front surface of the fascia.

16. A system, as in claim 14, wherein the dust shield attaches to the rear surface of the fascia.

17. A system, as in claim 16, wherein a bracket is used to attach the dust shield attaches to the rear surface of the fascia.

18. A system, as in claim 14, wherein the attachment means further comprises hook and loop material, the hook and loop material attached to the distal edge of the dust shield and having a corresponding section of hook and loop material to attach to the fascia;

whereby the dust shield is attached to the support rod by the hook and loop material.

19. A system, as in claim 14, further comprising:

at least two shelves arranged one above the other; and

at least one reduced size dust shield for attachment to the upper shelf, and having sufficient length to reach the approximate level of the lower shelf.

20. A system, as in claim 19, wherein the attachment means further comprises hook and loop material, the hook and loop material attached to the distal edge of the dust shield and having a corresponding section of hook and loop material to attach to the upper shelf;

whereby the dust shield is attached to the upper shelf by the hook and loop material.

21. A system for obstructing dust from settling on the top surfaces of garments, comprising:

a rear dust shield having a distal edge and a proximal edge;

a forward dust shield having a distal edge and a proximal edge; and

attachment means to attach the distal edge of the rear dust shield to an open shelf approximately above a garment hanger rod used with the open shelf such that the rear shield drapes over the rear edge of garments hung from the garment hanger rod;

attachment means to attach the distal edge of the front dust shield to the open shelf approximately above a garment hanger rod used with the open shelf such that the front shield drapes over the front edge of garments hung from the garment hanger rod and ends approximately at the shoulder of garments hung from the garment hanger rod;

the rear dust shield and the front dust shield are substantially joined by the attachment means to form a continuous garment dust shield that provides a dust barrier for garments hung from the garment hanger rod, and dust is obstructed when settling in a downward direction toward the top edges of the garments;

whereby airborne dust settling in a downward direction is obstructed from reaching the top portions of garments by the dust shield.