



**MILD** — soap or detergent are best for cleansing inside aluminum trim and exterior.

## PROPER ALUMINUM CARE

**I**N most aspects an aluminum mobile home is much like an automobile. It is a metal structure, framed, and sprung quite like an automobile. The paints used on it are generally of automotive quality, and the bare metal areas are quite similar finish-wise to the bright metal trim which decorates all of our cars. In fact, today, all of the finer cars are using bright aluminum in such places as trim, grills and moldings.

Since there is such a similarity between the outside finish of a mobile home and an automobile, the logical and true assumption to make is as follows: to retain the beauty and appearance of a mobile home, it should be cleaned and maintained in much the same manner as an automobile. Generally, a mobile home does not undergo the same amount of road service as an automobile and, consequently, the frequency of cleaning and maintenance will not be as great. If you wish to retain the original

beauty, luster, and brightness of the finish of the aluminum mobile home, it is important to keep the surface clean and free of a build-up of any foreign material, but you should never try to clean the finish in the direct rays of the sun or when the exterior is hot.

### General Cleaning and Maintenance

Oils, greases, dust and dirt can be removed by washing with any mild, non-abrasive soap or detergent, such as those found around the house or recommended for washing automotive finishes. The detergents used in automatic dishwashers are generally too strong and should not be used in cleaning painted or bare aluminum. When applying the cleaning solution, use a large sponge, soft cotton cloth applicator, or when patterned surfaces are to be cleaned, a medium-bristled brush. This should be followed by rinsing with clear water, flushing out all cracks, grooves, and crevices thoroughly, and then drying the entire surface using a chamois or



**AFTER** — cleansing, rinse with water and dry with chamois or cloth to prevent spotting.

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cloth to prevent spotting or streaking. After the finish is clean and dry you should apply a good grade of automotive paste or liquid wax which will greatly increase the life of the finish, maintain a uniform overall appearance, beauty and cleanliness, protect the finish from minor scratches and abrasion, and make later cleaning and maintenance less frequent, less time consuming, and less expensive.

Wax coatings should normally be replenished every three to six months. The exact life of the wax coating is dependent on the degree and severity of exposure and maintenance between waxings. To get the longest life from wax coatings, excess grime and soil should not be allowed to accumulate, and the waxed surface should be washed as often as needed with clear, cool water and dried with a damp chamois or cloth. A protective wax coating is particularly important for preserva-

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tion of the finish in seaboard localities where the finish is exposed to salt air, and in industrial areas where the finish is exposed to industrial fallout.

### **Removal of Stains and Stubborn Soil**

Where the unpainted aluminum finish has not had the benefit of a protective wax coating, light water stains or spots might remain after normal cleaning. When not too severe these stains or spots can be removed by applying a liquid or paste wax to these areas, and, while the wax is still "wet", rubbing lightly with pads of 00 or 000 grade stainless steel or mild steel wool in the direction or "grain" of the metal's finish. When mild steel wool is used, all remaining steel particles should be removed since they will rust and might stain the aluminum finish. If spots and stains are unusually stubborn and resist removal by the above method, try making a water paste of a mild scouring powder, applying with either a dampened soft cotton cloth, steel wool pads, or soap-filled steel wool pads. Here again rubbing should be in the direction or "grain" of the metal's finish. If scouring powder is used, rinse well with clear water and wipe dry. After the stains have been removed follow with a thorough waxing as previously described.

### **Use of Solvent**

Road tars and exhaust stains should be removed from the mobile home with the same type of solvents recommended for the removal of these types of soil from automotive finishes. All gasoline stations handle products of this type which are safe on both painted and bare aluminum surfaces. Make sure in these instances to apply enough solvent so that the residue is removed by solvent action rather than abrasive action to avoid scratching the surface. After these stains have been removed, it is best to follow with a normal washing, drying, and waxing as previously described.

Sap, seeds, gum and resin from trees should be removed as soon after they appear as possible. Sunlight and time will bake and harden these materials and make them al-

most impossible to remove without altering the underlying finish. These compounds can be removed by the solvent action of turpentine or by applying a saturated water solution of oxalic acid. Follow the application of oxalic acid with a thorough clear water rinse, paying particular attention to cracks and crevices. In mixing and applying oxalic acid, take care to avoid contact with the skin and eyes and since, if taken internally, it is poisonous, be especially careful in its handling. Here, as before, the removal of this material should be followed by a normal washing, drying and waxing.

### **Restoring Luster and Brightness**

Where unusually severe atmospheric or service conditions are encountered and especially when the mobile home has received improper or little maintenance, the unpainted aluminum might become cloudy or dull and remain so even after normal cleaning. When this occurs you can restore the original brightness and luster of the unpainted aluminum by applying an automotive polish cleaner or one of the numerous aluminum polishes that are available at grocery stores, department stores, hardware stores and automotive accessory stores.

These liquid or paste polishes can be applied to the surface with soft cloths or with portable power buffing equipment. When power buffing equipment is used, be sure to select a polish recommended for this particular method of application. Power buffing equipment will give a more professional polished finish when uniform wheel pressure is used over all the surface and excessive heating of the surface from the wheel is avoided. After using power buffing equipment the surface should be cleaned of all polishing compounds and waxed as previously described.

### **Painting and Repainting**

The exterior surfaces of most mobile homes contain areas that are painted with either synthetic automotive enamels, plastic materials or with lacquers. All of these materials will, with proper care, render long and satisfactory service. However, in time the paint may eventually disappear from some areas and leave voids or holidays. When this

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occurs you will probably wish to repaint the entire surface. Before painting remove any loose paint, sand the painted area lightly with fine sandpaper, and then wipe the entire surface to be painted with a solvent. Next apply a thin coat of a primer base coat to the bare areas and voids, and allow to dry. Then follow by applying at least two top coats of exterior paint, taking care to allow the first coat to dry properly before applying the next. Any paint store will be glad to recommend the solvent, primer and top coat.

### **Paint Adhesion**

The occasion may arise where you wish to paint an exterior surface of your aluminum mobile home that has not previously been painted. To assure good adhesion of the paint to the aluminum surface it is necessary to prepare the surface to properly receive the paint. The minimum requirements consist of lightly sanding the cleaned, wax-free surface and wiping with a solvent. The sanding is necessary to roughen the surface and provide a good "tooth" for paint adherence.

For better paint adhesion the aluminum surface of the mobile home can be roughened by use of an etching-type acid cleaner. You can do this by using one of the numerous aluminum pre-paint preparation materials which are obtainable from local paint stores and come with complete instructions for application, or you can prepare your own solution by mixing one part of 85 percent phosphoric acid and seven parts of 70 percent isopropyl or wood alcohol in a glass or earthenware container. These two materials are obtainable from local drug stores or industrial chemical supply houses. To be sure that the aluminum surface is clean and free from wax, it is best to solvent clean the surface prior to applying the acid etching material.

In this discussion I have tried to include all the problems that could be encountered in the cleaning and maintenance of both old and new mobile homes. Proper cleaning and maintenance will add years to the life of the finish on aluminum mobile homes, and will retain the beauty and sparkle generally associated with the carefree "home owners" of our nation's highways. ◀◀