

Stainless Steel Maintenance Guide



General Information

Coastal regions, the Great Lakes area and localities that use deicing salts are more susceptible to discoloration of stainless steel surfaces and may require more frequent cleaning.

Stainless steel contains at least 10% chromium. Oxygen from the atmosphere combines with the chromium in the stainless steel to form a passive chromium oxide film that protects the steel from further corrosion. This is a very thin layer and it will regenerate if it is removed by scratching or cleaning. Contamination of the surface by dirt, or other material, disrupts the regeneration of the film and may reduce the corrosion protection.

Routine cleaning is necessary to preserve the appearance and passive film. The frequency of cleaning will depend on environment and location of the product.

Maintenance crews often use deicing salt on roads and walkways in colder climates. Salt accumulations can make the environment around roads and walkways corrosive for all metals. Typically, deicing salt (sodium chloride and calcium chloride) deposits in cold climates can be heavier than the sea salt deposits found in coastal areas. Both of these salts are corrosive to architectural metals.

Surface contamination with salt is not limited to sites immediately beside roads or beaches. Road mist and salt contaminated airborne dust can carry deicing salt significant distances from busy streets and highways.

Carbon steel brushes or steel wool should not be used on stainless steel because they may leave particles embedded in the surface which can rust and give the appearance that the stainless steel is rusting.

Solvent Cleaning - Organic solvents can be used to remove oils and greases that have not had time to oxidize or decompose. The preferred solvent is one that does not contain chlorine, such as acetone, methyl alcohol, and mineral spirits.

Cleaning Tips

- Use a high-quality, non-abrasive cleaner that is specially formulated for stainless steel.
- Wipe in the direction of the natural metal grain.
- After cleaning, buff with a soft, clean, dry cloth to remove any residue that may be left on the surface.
- Stainless steel can be shined with a common spray wax or car polish suitable for stainless steel.

Avoid

- Avoid using steel brushes or steel wool on stainless steel because they may leave particles embedded on the surface which can lead to rust.
- Avoid abrasive cleaners, powders, scouring pads and brushes that may scratch and damage stainless steel.
- Avoid using glass cleaners, all purpose cleaners and harsh chemicals like chlorine or bleach because they may leave streaks and damage or discolor the surface.

Cleaning Steps

1. Rinse the product with clean fresh water and wipe it down with a soft rag.
2. If the stain persists, use a non-abrasive powder cleaner and a synthetic pad such as Scotch-Brite™ and rub with the finish grain. For more aggressive cleaning, a small amount of vinegar can be added to the scouring powder.
3. Cleaning should always be followed by rinsing in clean fresh water.
4. Dry thoroughly to eliminate the possibility of water stains.
5. The product may be polished using a common spray wax or car polish suitable for stainless steel.



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