

# TECHNICAL BULLETIN



## Cleaning MCM Panels – Not a One Time Effort

### **Overview:**

MCM panels are available in a variety of appearances. Whether painted, anodized, or left with a natural appearance, MCM panels can remain an attractive feature on a building for many years. While the effects of UV exposure, pollution, and other environmental events can negatively impact the appearance of MCM panels, most often these negative effects can be prevented and, sometimes, even reversed.

### **Painted Finishes:**

There are a variety of different painted finishes available for MCM panels. There are also a number of different processes to apply these finishes. Whether spray applied or coil coated polyester or Kynar based; each painted finish has been tested to show performance when exposed to normal environmental conditions. A quality finish, and a regular maintenance program, can maintain the “as installed” appearance of the MCM panels.

Regular maintenance on the panels is required, just as with the glass windows and doors. Buildings are typically cleaned on a semiannual basis using power washing procedures to clean any contaminants from the panels. Care should be taken to avoid excessive pressure that may degrade any applied finish or negatively impact the visual appearance. If further steps are required, a mild soap solution is often applied and then rinsed off the building. Excessive rubbing or abrasive materials are not recommended as this type of material could permanently scratch the finish. Cleaning should always be done in moderate temperatures as extremely warm temperatures would accelerate the evaporation of water from the solution, potentially leaving behind a film on the panel. Cold temperatures may also lead to poor cleaning of the panels. Never use strong solvents or aggressive cleaners on a paint finish to prevent damage to the finish.

The general rule of thumb is to clean the entire building, panels and glass, semiannually using a soap solution or more often if in a difficult environment.

### **Anodized Finishes:**

Unlike panels where the finish is an applied paint, the anodizing process actually seals the surface of the aluminum. The process itself creates open cells in the aluminum surface which can be filled with organic or inorganic dyes and then sealed to protect the dyes from damage due to UV exposure. Excessive abrasion on the panel surface can damage that seal coat exposing the dyes which can then fade or change color over time. This is often visually apparent as a cloudy or “whitened” finish on the panel surface. It is never recommended to use solvents or other abrasive chemicals to clean the panels as an even appearance across the finished panel will be difficult if not impossible to maintain.

Again, semiannual cleaning is the general rule or more often if in a difficult environment.

## **Natural Finishes:**

MCM panels by definition may use a metal surface that ages naturally over time. Copper and zinc are two examples of this natural metal surface. As with the other finishes, semiannual cleaning is recommended however great care must be taken not to damage the changing natural surface.

## **Summary:**

MCM panels are available in a variety of different surface finishes. To maintain the appearance of the original finish panel cleaning and overall building maintenance are required. Lack of attention to this maintenance program could leave the building permanently stained with the original finish unable to be brought back to the initial appearance.

Additional cleaning and finish maintenance recommendations are available from each of the MCM panel manufacturers. Specific guidelines for unique finishes are also available from the manufacturers or finish suppliers.

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