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MAINTENANCE MATTERS

Aluminum Wheel Care and Cleaning

In this week's FYI "Maintenance Matters", we discuss the proper care and cleaning of Alcoa aluminum wheels.

MCI presently uses two types of aluminum wheels; first, the familiar standard polished wheel (standard on the MCI® E4500) which most of our customers currently use; and a newer, optional Alcoa Dura-Bright® wheel — awarded the Most Valuable Product Award for 2002 by RoadStar magazine.

Offering the latest in protection, the new Dura-Bright rim is low-maintenance®. In fact, according to Alcoa, the only care required for this rim finish is normal washing and rinsing. The patented treatment keeps the wheel looking new, and virtually never needs polishing; something to consider when it's time to order replacement rims or a new vehicle.

Following are the steps Alcoa recommends for keeping your standard polished aluminum wheels looking new, using their aluminum care system**:

✓ Step 1: Cleaner - Dissolves oxidation

- Use on uncoated aluminum only. Like many metal cleaners, the Alcoa Step 1 cleaner contains mild acids that should not be used on coated or anodized surfaces. Rinse the aluminum with water and let air dry. While the aluminum is still wet, set the Step 1 Cleaner nozzle on the smallest opening and spray the cleaner on the surface evenly. Allow the cleaner to work on the surface for 15 to 20 minutes. The metal will turn milk white; a normal blanching effect that Step 2 polish will counteract. Rinse the cleaner off the aluminum with water and let air dry.
- Polish immediately after cleaning.

✓ Step 2: Polish - Revives the brilliant shine

- Use a clean, soft cloth to apply a little bit of polish to a **small** area. Concentrate on one small area at a time - about six inches square - to keep the polish from drying out. Rub vigorously to work the moist polish into the surface. As your cloth will build up a black residue, turn the cloth frequently as you polish.
- For a glossy shine with less effort, use an orbital buffer. As aluminum surfaces vary, Alcoa recommends that you first test a small section to make sure the buffer is not too aggressive for the surface you want to polish.

✓ Step 3: Sealant - Inhibits oxidation

- Use the sealant only on a **dry** surface. Water will cause streaking. Use a dry cloth to wipe around lug nut covers, hand holes, and other areas where water may be trapped. Before you apply the sealant, make sure you have a water hose or other ready source of water for rinsing. When the aluminum is dry, spray the sealant generously onto the cleaned and polished surface. Get it good and soaked. Allow the sealant to air dry for about five minutes, then rinse the aluminum with water.
- For best results, finish by wiping the surface with a clean, dry cloth to remove excess water then let it air dry.

Alcoa maintains that aluminum treated with the Alcoa three-step care system kept its shine six times longer than ordinary cleaners and polishes.

To obtain the best results, always remove the wheel when hand polishing. It makes the wheel easier to work with and allows for a more even polish application. When reinstalling the wheel, always make sure to use a protector so as to not mar the surface. And, perhaps most importantly, remember to correctly torque the wheels.

If you're interested in upgrading to Alcoa aluminum wheels, MCI Fleet Support carries a full line. Please contact your [MCI Fleet Support Manager](#).

Source:

* www.dontpolish.com
** www.alcoawheels.com/maint/aluminum/index.asp