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Cleaning instructions

Instructions for cleaning painted surfaces on commercial vehicles, buses, trams and other vehicles.

1. INTRODUCTION

A clean well cared for appearance always makes a good impression. A colourful vehicle always gets noticed.

The attention that a company gives to maintenance and appearance by ensuring that its vehicles are clean sends a clear message to its current and potential customers. It is good publicity and creates favourable expectations of the company. Besides these psychological aspects, there is also a rational aspect which is just as important.

Thorough and regular cleaning prevents the protective layer of paint from being damaged and prevents premature corrosion. The paint system does not only look better, it also lasts longer, which saves on repair costs and downtime.

Cleaning is a science in itself. The technique required to achieve an effective result varies from washing by hand to treatment in a car wash. The use of a car wash concerns a professional concept where the work is automated as much as possible in a responsible manner. However, due to their size, their irregular shapes or simply due to company circumstances, many vehicles are washed by hand using a high-pressure hose. Unfortunately, this often leads to the paintwork becoming damaged, sometimes to such an extent that part of the paintwork comes loose, because this cleaning method is not applied correctly. This is particularly the case when the paintwork is new, while alkyd paint is more sensitive than 2K paint. It may also be due to insufficient preparation before the paint is applied or to a paint system that is simply unsuitable. In all these cases, the heavy load that the surface is subjected to as a result of cleaning will sooner or later cause damage. This (too) heavy load can be the result of the high water pressure and/or the high water temperature. The use of a high-pressure hose, therefore, requires thorough instruction from the supplier. On the other hand, we, as a paint supplier, believe that we should give advice based on our practical experience.

2. CLEANING

2.1 General information

Paintwork is always dirty. Depending on the kind of dirt and the type of paint, this dirt can be more or less difficult to remove. Dirt consists of many different substances, such as fine sand and clay particles (hardness 6 and 7, respectively), iron oxide, carbon (soot), oil particles, grease particles (dead insects), sugar compounds (greenflies) and faeces (birds and insects). Sand and small particles, in particular, can scratch the paint and windows when the vehicle is not cleaned with the necessary skill. It is, therefore, recommended to wet the surface beforehand so that the attached dirt can absorb the water and/or become soft and so that it can be removed more easily. The adhesion will, of course, be less on smooth, shiny paint than on paint which is less shiny or more weather-beaten or paint which has miniscule scratches.

A practical tip: always start cleaning from the bottom upwards.

2.2 What you need

To clean a vehicle, we recommend you use:

- Clean tap water (maximum temperature of 60° C).
- Clean tap water to which the manufacturer's recommended dosage of concentrated product has been added.
- Clean tap water of which the pH value has been increased to no more than 9 by adding an alkaline salt as far as this is required for quicker cleaning, which is partly dependent on the type of dirt.

Hardened, stubborn tar or asphalt residue which is stuck on paintwork and which is at least 3 months old can be removed with a soft cloth which has been soaked in white spirit.

2.3 High-pressure hose

When using a high-pressure hose, the temperature must not exceed 60° C. The maximum permissible pressure is 80 – 100 bar. The distance from the nozzle to the surface to be cleaned must be greater than 30 cm. The angle used to spray the vehicle must vary between 30 and 60 degrees.

NB If the recommended temperature, pressure, distance and angle are exceeded, then there is a chance that the load placed on the paintwork will be great enough to cause damage.

ATTENTION

The advice given above is only applicable when cleaning paintwork with an alkyd resin or a 2K polyurethane base that is more than 3 months old. Particularly after repair work it is important not to forget this. Until the paintwork is at least 3 months old, cold water (12 - 15° C) and a neutral detergent must be used.

2.4 General warnings

Only use non-scouring, neutral to slightly alkaline cleaning products. Never use dirty, hard cloths, sponges, cleaning pads or cleaning mats. Never use diluents, thinners or solvents, because these can harm the paintwork.

2.5 Recommendations

When a newly painted or sprayed vehicle is delivered to the user, it is recommended to provide cleaning advice, such as in the form of a sticker which includes the date that the vehicle was treated. For example, the sticker could contain the following:

- For the first three months, use cold water with, if necessary, a small amount of a neutral detergent. Pressure 40 - 60 bar.
- After three months, hot water can be used with a slightly alkaline detergent. Temperature 40 - 60° C. Pressure 80 - 100 bar.
- Distance from the nozzle to the surface: at least 30 cm.
- Warning: A higher temperature, a shorter distance, a higher pressure or aggressive chemicals can cause the paint to come loose.