

Your RVs Gel Coat Finish

Congratulations! You are the proud owner of a new RV. You are also the owner of a new gel coat finish on the RVs exterior, and we would like you to be as proud of it as we are. That beautiful, shiny new color you love is the result of many years of gel coat research, testing and development.

But as proud as we are of the gel coat, no finish is totally impervious to chemicals and weathering. Imagine what a brand new car could look like if allowed to sit exposed to the sun and other environmental conditions for years with no cover and no washing or waxing. With the same minimum maintenance you would ordinarily give your new automobiles finish, your RVs gel coat finish will retain its depth of color and gloss for years.

Overall Maintenance

Normal maintenance of your gel coated RV is similar to the care you would give your automobile. Overall, automotive cleaners and waxes work fine.

Note: Do not use caustic or highly alkaline (high pH) cleaners or those containing ammonia. These type of cleaners may darken white or off-white weathered gel coat surfaces. A chemical reaction producing staining occurs if these type of cleaners are used on weathered gel coat. However, the stain may be removed with a rubbing compound or by lightly sanding with 400 grit sandpaper followed by an application of rubbing compound and a thorough waxing.

Cleaning

We recommend general washing to avoid soil build-up and staining. The soil on your gel coat finish is the result of regular use and environmental pollutants such as soot and smog. Periodic cleaning with a mild detergent is necessary to remove normal deposits of soil.

Waxing

From constant exposure over time to our natural environment and undesired pollutants, the gel coat begins to lose its gloss. To restore your finish to the original gloss and color requires your special attention. After washing with a mild soap or detergent give the surface a good polishing with a self-cleaning marine or automotive wax. Waxing in the fall and spring is generally recommended to maintain and restore most of the

original gloss. If the surface has not been maintained and has weathered badly, and if cleaning and waxing does not restore the finish satisfactorily, compounding will be required.

Compounding

Polishing compound (fine abrasive) or rubbing compound (coarser abrasive) is recommended for use on RVs to remove scratches, stains, or a severely weathered surface. Polishing or rubbing compound can be applied by hand or by mechanical means, such as an electrical or pneumatic buffer. After the scratched, stained or weathered surface has been removed, it should be waxed to enhance the gloss and color while providing a seal to retard staining or new soil accumulation.

Discoloration Removal

Your local fiberglass repair shop is best equipped and trained to do this work. If regular washing and waxing has been neglected, discoloration of the gel coated fiberglass surface may occur. Discolored areas are very shallow in depth, literally right on the surface. The discoloration may be removed by gently wet-sanding the affected areas only by using 600 grit, wet or dry specially treated waterproof sandpaper. It's important to always sand in one direction, this includes the curves too. Use plenty of water to cool and clean the sandpaper and cut back on dust. After you are finished sanding, dry the areas and verify all the discoloration has been removed. If not, repeat the process.

After all the discoloration has been removed, the area will need to be buffed. Using an electrical or pneumatic buffer, buff at low speed (1750 rpm – 2250 rpm), this will restore the luster to the sanded surface. Using a generous amount of rubbing compound, apply it in a circular motion with a soft wool pad. When buffing has been completed, wash off the rubbing compound with clean water, and dry the surface.

To restore the gloss to the affected area, use a high-grade marine or automotive wax.

Repairs

During the life of your RV, some damage to the gel coat surface is unavoidable. **We recommend repairs be done only by trained, experienced professionals at your local fiberglass repair shop.**

Scratches – If the scratch is in the gel coat surface, not penetrating the fiberglass, use an automotive polishing compound and rub it out. Apply the compound by hand using a damp rag or by using a power buffer. The scratch may not entirely disappear, but it should be noticeably better.

Gouges and Chips – Our recommended patching procedure is to first clean the area needing repair with an acetone solvent to remove all traces of wax and oil. Next, thoroughly mix one tablespoon of "Patch Paste" with two or three drops of catalyst on a scrap piece of cardboard.

Apply the mixture to the pit, chip or gouge with a single-edge razor blade, matching the surface and contour of the area being repaired. Apply slightly more mixture to avoid having to fill the damaged section a second time. Allow the patch to harden thoroughly for a minimum of two to three hours.

Using a fine grit "wet or dry" sandpaper on sanding block, wet-sand the patch until it is level with the surrounding surface. Finish with a automotive rubbing compound using the same approach as used for the scratches.

Refinishing

For a severely scratched or weathered fiberglass RV that is no longer restorable by using the previous methods, it may then be necessary to refinish it with two-package or two-part aliphatic urethane enamel. **This can be done very effectively, but its recommended refinishing should only be done by experienced professionals.**

