

Technical Bulletin

FIELD PAINTING UNPAINTED ALUMINUM

From time to time, there are inquiries as to the proper method required for the field application of paint on unpainted (plain) aluminum roofing and siding. This can be satisfactorily accomplished by following one of the procedures listed below:

A. Aluminum Exposed to the Elements for Less Than Six (6) Months

1. Clean the panels to be painted with a mild household detergent such as Tide, etc. Rinse the panels thoroughly with clear water and let dry.
2. To prepare the aluminum to receive and hold paint, treat the surfaces with a cold water solution of phosphoric acid. Most paint stores carry such a pre-treatment solution, such as "Aluma-Prep" as manufactured by Amchem. When using commercially bought pre-treatments, be sure to follow the manufacturer's label instructions. If you want to prepare your own pre-treatment solution, a recommended mixture would be:

35% Butyl Alcohol (by volume)
25% ISO Propyl Alcohol
18% Phosphoric Acid (85 wt%)
22% water

The above solution can be applied by brush or cloth and should be left on the aluminum 3 to 5 minutes, taking care not to let it dry. It should then be thoroughly rinsed off with clear water.

CAUTION:

As with any acidic solution, extreme care should be exercised to protect eyes, skin, etc. Protective clothing, including rubber gloves and eye glasses, should be worn.

3. After the panels are thoroughly dry, apply a coat of any good metal primer, except those containing lead pigments. Aluminum paints for metal make excellent primers.
4. Apply a finish coat of any good exterior type paint. Be sure that the finish coat is compatible with the primer used. Your paint supplier should be able to verify this for you.

B. Aluminum Exposed to the Elements for Six (6) Months or More

Follow the same procedure as outlined in Section "A" except that Step No. 2 can be deleted since the aluminum will have a sufficient amount of self-etching to insure good paint adhesion.