

Balcony Maintenance

Many Regency Tower residents have expressed concern about suspicious looking “spots” on the coated aluminum railing surrounding their balconies. After investigating this phenomenon, the Construction Committee determined it would be beneficial to share the following information with all our neighbors.

The “spots” on the railings are particulate debris or, more simply, dirt. The railings are aluminum covered by a protective coating. **Aluminum does not rust!** Whenever construction occurs in a neighborhood, small particles of wood, iron, steel, PVC, assorted plastics, chemicals, and other construction materials are strewn into the atmosphere and blown about indiscriminately. Unfortunately, these particles tend to land in the same neighborhood where they are generated. As we all know, there is an enormous amount of ongoing construction along Galt Ocean Drive. Each one of these different particles has its own unique characteristics. For instance, when small ferrous (iron) particles land, they rust until they completely disintegrate. Although it appears as if the railing is rusting, it is actually a rusting particle sitting on the surface of the coating. The longer these particles are allowed to rust, the more difficult it becomes to wipe them off. You can see evidence of these small reddish brown particles on the railing, on the balcony floor, and even on the building walls. The small cellulose particles (wood) that are responsible for the tiny green spots are easier to clean than the reddish ferrous stains. Plastics and oil-based substances last a lot longer than the iron and wood particles.

The most effective way to deal with this problem is to keep your railings clean. Wipe them every few weeks with soap and water or a non-abrasive commercial cleanser. A light wax will go a long way to preserve the finish of the railing. Essentially, it would behoove you to treat your railing as you would your car or bicycle. Regular cleaning will prevent its deterioration from halides (salt buildup), airborne construction debris, PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls) and other organic pollutants, thereby maintaining its appearance.

For those of us lacking the ambition to hand-rub wax on the railings, a spray wax will suffice. The debris, salt and chemicals are trapped on the surface of the wax coating. Every few weeks, simply wipe the surface clean and lightly apply the spray wax to the railings again. To prevent an unsightly build-up, remove the wax every three or four months with a non-abrasive commercial cleanser before spraying on the wax coating again. Spending a few minutes twice a month will add years to the useful life of the white enamel coating. The wax will also slow the coating’s tendency to erode, blister and peel. Delaying the need to recoat our balcony railings will postpone any attendant assessment.

It’s Your Money!

If the railing’s protective coating begins to blister and peel, it can be easily repaired. Rehabilitating the coating defects with a flat white enamel spray product will continue to protect the underlying aluminum. It is not difficult to apply and is extremely inexpensive. For assistance, contact the office and report the problem.