

Avery Dennison Instructional Bulletin 1.8

Vehicle Wrap and Graphics Maintenance

Introduction

Producing quality vehicle graphics is one thing, but ensuring it stands the test of time is another. An applied vehicle graphic is often overlooked in terms of care and maintenance, which is why providing written care instructions to your client, is so important.

Infrequent, lack of or incorrect maintenance can lead to the vehicle graphics degrading prematurely and not lasting the expected duration.

Key points for maintaining vehicle graphics

- **Important Note:** If the graphics have reached the end of their intended service life or you notice any decline in the appearance, loss of gloss, discolouration or degradation of the film, you must contact the company that installed the graphics for assessment immediately.
- PVC films behave similar to automotive paint, if left in constant contact with dirt, grime and contaminants, will eventually degrade, especially if left uncleaned and exposed to UV light and heat. Therefore, it's recommended that **vehicle graphics should be cleaned on a weekly basis or whenever they appear dirty**, at an absolute minimum every 2 weeks. This ensures that your graphics retain optimal visual appearance for the duration of their life.
- Park the vehicle in shade or under cover whenever possible.
- Spot cleaning of surface contaminants like bugs, bird droppings, tree sap and tar is required immediately after it appears, as it can stain and damage the PCV film.
- **Generally, the best way to clean a finished graphic is with a dedicated car wash or mild liquid detergent.** It's important that the detergent is specifically designed to be used for vehicles:
 - Free from abrasive components;
 - Ideally PH Balanced, thus not highly acidic or alkaline (pH level between 5 and 9);
 - Free from strong solvents and/or alcohols.

Note: Do not use common home dishwashing detergents, or any soaps not designed for vehicle washing.

When hand washing the first step is to rinse the vehicle with clean water, thus avoiding scratching the graphics, then gently agitate a soapy mild detergent and water solution with a synthetic or natural sponge, starting from the top of the vehicle and working down. Avoid abrading the film surface with unnecessary scrubbing. It's important to rinse the graphic thoroughly with clean water when finished. Allow the water to dry naturally or dab dry with a Chamois or soft non abrasive towel, being careful not to lift film edges.

- **Stronger cleaning products can be used to remove remaining contaminants** like citrus-based cleaners, isopropyl alcohol, heptane and methylated sprits. However, it's crucial to remember that cleaners such as solvents may damage a graphic or even a painted surface. Therefore, you should always test these solvents in an inconspicuous area prior to cleaning the graphic. Always rinse the surface with clean water following the use of any cleaning agent.

- **High pressure cleaning equipment or power cleaning may be used**, provided a maximum pressure of 1200 psi (80 bars or 84 kg/cm²) is used. That's because excessive water pressure can cause damage by forcing water underneath the graphic.

If the cleaning system is heated, a water temperature of 70 degrees Celsius should not be exceeded. In order to reduce the risk of decal edge lift, a minimum distance of 30cm should be maintained from the nozzle to the film surface. Additionally, the dispenser nozzle should always be perpendicular (90° +/- 10°) to the film surface. Sharp angles of the water stream can promote decal edge lift, edge curl or delamination through the loss of adhesion.

- **The use of specialised vehicle wax or waterless washing systems can aid in protecting the graphics from the elements.** These products can help maintain the gloss level and performance of the film, but they need to comply with previously mentioned specifications, and must be used only on a customer test and approve basis, always test in an inconspicuous location to ensure its suitability. Do not use polish or cutting agents as they will abrade and scratch the film. Products like Turtle Wax Ice or Aqanil Waterless Car Wash will aid in restoring and protecting the film.
- **We do not recommend the use of automatic brush car washes**, as the brush will often catch the edges of the graphic. It can also reduce the gloss finish of the graphic and cause scratching to the surface. If an automatic car wash is to be used, then a brushless system is desired.
- **On boats and in areas prone to sea salt spray**, it's important to clean the graphic more frequently. Furthermore, vinyl films are not designed to be permanently submerged. We recommend cleaning boat graphics with fresh water after each use.

For further information, contact your local Avery Graphics representative.