



▲ Photo 1

Hardware Maintenance

A

by

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AS AN INSTALLER OF HARDWARE, I AM NOT SURE THAT this subject is totally in my scope. However, I am going to accept part of the blame for what happened. What I am referring to is damage to the finish on some new hardware, as well as a directive from our administration.

I work at a small university that only has a few academic buildings, so students are passing through the main doors to the library and classroom buildings several times a day. Recently, several of our students fell ill during an outbreak of the flu, so the administration asked our custodial department to sanitize the doorknobs and other public areas. Had I known this, I might have headed off what became a not-so-small problem.

The new hardware on our new main doors has a 613 (oil-rubbed bronze) finish, also known as the "living finish." Our facility is of an age at which most of the hardware has a 605 finish (lacquered brass). We are slowly changing to a more standard 626 for offices, dorm rooms, and classrooms with levers, while using a 613 finish for the main doors to our buildings and lecture halls, since there is now an additional charge for the 605 finish. Unfortunately, I have had issues with the 613 finish being worn off with a little "help" from our custodial staff.

Photos Courtesy of David Blair



▲ Photos 2 and 3 ▼



Photo 1 is what a 613 finish with a little wear patina should look like. It has a nice, rich look, and you can see where the natural wear is taking place.

The custodial department did as asked and cleaned the hardware in the buildings with an antibacterial citrus cleaner. Fortunately, they had only cleaned eight of our 16 main entrance doors before I realized what was happening. Photos 2 and 3 show what they did to the finish while sanitizing. Needless to say, I was a little unhappy.

One of the first things I did was call my factory rep and explain the situation. He, in turn, had to call his boss, and so on. The final answer was they had no definitive cleaning process for this finish, no way of refurbishing the finish, and no, this type of event is not covered by the warranty. I understand the warranty part—what we did was clearly a deliberate attempt to clean the bar with a chemical agent that resulted in the finish being stripped. However, that still left me without any real solutions the problem we'd created.

We looked at several options for refinishing the bars, but none were

How Do I Care For My Lock Finish?

Figure 1

Finish Care and Cleaning of External Trim

Finishes	Care Guidelines
505 (PVD Bright Brass) 605 (Bright Brass) 609 (Antique Brass) 619 (Satin Nickel) 622 (Flat Black)	Lacquered or clear-coated finished should be wiped with a soft, damp cloth. A mild soap may be used if very dirty. Particular care should be taken to avoid paint smears, thinners and strong cleaning agents, as they will quickly destroy the protective coatings and subject the finish to rapid oxidation and discoloration. Initial care for finishes requires only periodic cleaning with mild, non-abrasive soap and light buffing with a soft cloth.
613 (Oil-Rubbed Bronze)	Wipe with a little vegetable oil on a soft cloth. Too much oil may leave a residue to come off on the hands. Household detergents and mild abrasives may be used to restore the high metal color without seriously affecting the original compound of the metal. Then rub with a paste wax.
625 (Bright Chrome) 626 (Satin Chrome)	Wipe with a soft, damp cloth. A high-grade chrome polish may be used according to directions to clean and restore the original shine and satin finish.

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inexpensive (other than using a can of brown paste shoe polish). We soon realized that it would be about the same price just to replace the bars with new ones. Ultimately, however, we did nothing.

It has been several months now since this was done, and the bars are starting to get a patina matching the ones that were not stripped. I am hoping that in another year, people may not be able to tell too much difference.

However, this experience did lead to a lengthy discussion with the custodial manager about what you can and cannot use to clean hardware. I looked specifically through the installation instructions supplied with the hardware I installed, and I was surprised not to find any cleaning guides printed on the instructions that could be passed on to the end user. Further research online turned up this guide, which was included with several manufacturers' hardware specs (see Figure 1).


I printed off a copy for the manager and thought it would resolve any future issues with the cleaning of hardware. However, over the 2012 Christmas break, one of the new custodial staff used a degreaser on an entire department's doorknobs. I am not sure what he used to spray them with, but not only did it strip the lacquer off the lock, it corroded the interchangeable cores to the point that you couldn't get your key in. This created an enormous problem, as I soon had multiple staff members complaining about their locks. We ended up lubing and/or replacing more than 40 cores and locksets.

I have a very good working relationship with my factory reps, and I have almost two decades of

experience as an institutional locksmith. But just because *I* know how something should be done does not mean others do. In this case, the "others" were my custodial staff, but I have no doubt that there are countless other end users out there who are similarly uninformed.

When a client makes a large purchase like new exterior doors or new hardware, it would be a benefit for all involved if the end user and his or her maintenance staff were to sit down with the factory rep or local supplier to make sure all questions are answered about what needs to be done to maintain warranties, but also how to properly clean and maintain these new purchases. With the way budgets are being squeezed and with the price of hardware increasing, a little communication can result in huge savings, as well as very happy customers.

A few lessons can be learned from this event:

1. A warranty doesn't cover every type of situation.
2. No matter the quality of the hardware, a little citrus can wreak havoc.
3. Untrained staff will do as they are told with whatever chemical they are given, not realizing the kind of damage they are doing.
4. Guides to cleaning the various finishes are not always easy to find.
5. A little follow-up from the factory to the end user can be one of the best ways to prevent this type of situation to begin with. 

About the Author: David Blair has worked as an institutional locksmith for 17 years at both government facilities and a university. He is the author of the blog institutionallo locksmith.blogspot.com and can be reached at dblair@oru.edu.