Stainless steel flashings care and maintenance guide
October 2026

Looking after your stainless steel flashings.
Regular fresh-water washing keeps them looking good and performing well in coastal zones.

IBuilt supplied stainless steel flashings from Sigma Sheetmetals come in 304 or 316 grade. 316 stainless steel flashings are recommended for coastal zones due to the corrosion resistant properties of the material. However, it is not completely immune to surface staining or corrosion, particularly in harsh marine environments.



WHAT IS TEA-STAINING?

Discolouration commonly known as “tea-staining” occurs when airborne salt, moisture and other contaminants settle on the stainless steel surface if left unpainted. If these deposits are not regularly washed away, salts from sea spray can concentrate on the surface and cause small amounts of surface oxidation, resulting in a brown or tea-coloured appearance.

Tea-staining is generally a cosmetic surface issue rather than a structural failure of the stainless steel. It is more likely to occur in areas exposed to direct sea spray, sheltered locations that receive little natural rain washing, or where salt and contaminants can accumulate.

Regular cleaning with fresh water is the most effective way to minimise tea-staining and maintain the appearance and performance of the stainless steel.

RECOMMENDED INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

Frequency	Homeowner action
Monthly	Visually inspect flashings for brown staining, salt deposits, dirt or other contaminants. Pay particular attention to joints, corners and sheltered areas.
Every 3 months	Thoroughly wash the stainless steel with clean fresh water. Use a soft cloth or soft-bristle brush if required.
Every 6 months	Inspect more closely for persistent staining, pitting, scratches or areas where contaminants are accumulating. Clean affected areas as required.
After severe coastal weather	Rinse exposed flashings with fresh water after significant storms, salt spray or periods of strong onshore winds, where practical.
Annually	Complete a general condition check and record any areas showing recurring staining or deterioration. Arrange professional advice if pitting or corrosion appears to be developing.

CLEANING GUIDANCE

Use clean water, a non-abrasive pad and non-abrasive detergent where necessary. Always rinse thoroughly afterwards and, where practical, wipe the surface dry.

For very harsh coastal locations, the three-monthly fresh-water wash should be treated as the minimum maintenance requirement, rather than relying on rain to clean the flashings.

If staining becomes persistent, or if pitting, surface damage or other signs of corrosion are observed, seek professional advice rather than using increasingly aggressive cleaning products.

If any further information is required, please contact the IBuilt team.

Avoid

- Steel wool
- Wire brushes
- Harsh abrasive cleaners
- Hydrochloric/muriatic acid
- Chlorine-based cleaners

These can damage or contaminate the stainless-steel surface and make corrosion more likely.



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