

What is Rust?

Rust is a naturally occurring phenomenon when certain metals are exposed to oxygen and water for a length of time. The only metals that rust are steel and iron. Other metals may become corroded but they do not rust. It is an actual chemical change which takes place when metal starts to rust.

Rust is a chemical compound. The iron atoms fuse together with the hydrogen and oxygen atoms. The formula for water is H₂O. Adding the water creates a chemical reaction. The result can be seen as rust.

Left in a totally dry environment, iron or steel will not rust. It is when moisture is added that the oxidation process starts to occur. Because the air we breathe has moisture in it, oxidation will occur even if there is no water added to the metal. There is enough hydrogen and oxygen in the air to allow the atoms to bond with the iron. This creates the chemical reaction known as oxidation, or rust.



Prevention

As we know prevention is better than cure. Due to the nature of joinery, we can not seal cabinets to be watertight. As doors and drawers require gaps to function it is impossible. There are things you can do to prevent rust from forming on your metal surfaces. The first is to maintain all exposed surfaces with a simple wipe down regularly. Maintenance is your biggest ally against rust and there is no substitute.

Falling under the maintenance banner once more is a regular spray of a lubricant such as WD40, even olive oil has been known to form a protective barrier against moisture and therefore rust. Another excellent idea is to keep a quantity of silica gel packets inside cabinets and drawers to dry out the air in small places.

At the end of the day your best offense is defense - When items which are made of iron or steel become wet, dry them off as soon as possible. This keeps the oxidation process to a minimum. You can prevent rust in this manner.

