Technical Bulletin
Maintenance Tips for Engineered Wood Siding and Trim
General Information

This bulletin is designed to cover the refinishing of Factory Prefinished, Unprimed or Factory primed siding and trim which were field coated at the time of original installation. The manufacturer’s recommended installation and painting instructions should be consulted for initial field coating of unprimed or primed Engineered Wood siding and trim, as well as for repainting.

Engineered Wood siding and trim products are wood-based building products which have been specifically manufactured to provide excellent long-term resistance to weathering when adequately protected by suitable exterior paint. Engineered Wood siding and trim is manufactured by many companies, by many different processes and in a variety of smooth, textured or embossed surfaces. The siding and trim manufacturers usually provide a specific service warranty for their installation and topcoat application. Each manufacturer’s warranty should be reviewed for service expectation.

When To Refinish

Exterior wall finishes weather most rapidly on those portions of the building that receive greatest exposure to sun and moisture. These areas of maximum exposure generally will need refinishing sooner than other areas, perhaps as often as every five years. Refinishing should be done before severe weathering has started. The frequency of refinishing will depend on the climate and exposure, the type, quality and color of the paint, and on other factors such as the method of paint application and the number of coats. A factory-coated product could require repainting less quickly, up to 15 years after installation.

Repainting is best dictated by the degree of wear or erosion of the old paint. Specifically, refinishing is indicated if the surface is discolored and blotchy or if the coating is too thin, porous, checked, cracked, scaling or chalking to a point where it no longer protects or hides the surface. Severe paint cracking, flaking, peeling or board swelling is not normal weathering. Such severely weathered siding or trim may be difficult to restore to its original appearance. Such problems may be caused by inferior paints, incompatible or dissimilar paints and improper painting procedures. Some of the factors relating to these problems are improper surface preparation, dilution of paints, insufficient or excessive coverage, application on wet surfaces, painting at improper temperatures or improper construction which permits water or water vapor to reach, condense, or freeze on the back side of the siding or trim.

Repainting is sometimes dictated solely for the purpose of changing the color of the home. Frequent repainting can result in excessive paint film thickness which may cause problems such as cracking and peeling. On the other hand, many people are inclined to delay maintenance repainting too long, which can add substantially to the amount of surface preparation work required. Follow the advice of your paint dealer for the products recommended for painting Engineered Wood siding and trim.

How To Prepare The Surface

1. Do not use a pressure washer to clean the siding or trim.
2. Remove loose paint material by sanding and careful scraping. It usually is not necessary or desirable to cut or sand into the surface of the siding or trim.
3. Clean the surface of dust and dirt by washing with detergent solution using a suitable scrub brush followed by a clean water rinse.
4. If the surface is still discolored or stained, refer to Other Stains in the section on Mildew and Other Stains.
5. To assure paint adhesion on certain glossy type finishes or unweathered areas, it may be necessary to scuff sand these surfaces prior to repainting.
6. Check for loose or cracked caulking which should be removed and replaced with good quality sealant, one which is flexible and paintable.
Mildew And Other Stains

Mildew: Sometimes paint will have a dirty streaked appearance typical of mold growth or mildew. Paint and other organic surfaces may deteriorate and become permanently stained if mildew is allowed to continue growing on them. Mildew is a fungal growth on the painted surface which results from spores in the air attaching to the surface and must be treated before repainting. Painting over mildew will not control its growth. It will grow through the new paint.

Identification of mildew is the first step in its elimination. Because most mildew growth is black, it is frequently confused with dirt. Try to first clean the dirt off of the siding or trim by gently scrubbing the surface using a soft brush and a non-abrasive laundry detergent, or a dishwasher detergent diluted as follows: 1/3 cup detergent for 3 liters of water. Because they produce suds, dish detergents are not recommended. Gently rinse the surface with a low-pressure hose (under 100 psi). If the mildew remains after washing, use a chemical surface wash such as a drop of 5% sodium hypochlorite solution (common household bleach) to the stain. Mildew will usually bleach in one or two minutes. Mildew may be removed by using one of the many commercial mildew washes which have been specially formulated for this particular task. Your local paint dealer can usually recommend a good surface wash. It is important that you follow the label instructions carefully and heed all precautionary warnings.

An alternative method for removing mildew is by scrubbing the mildewed surface thoroughly with the following solution:

- 2/3 cup trisodium phosphate (TSP)
- 1/3 cup detergent containing no ammonia (Tide brand or equivalent)
- 1 quart 5% sodium hypochlorite (Clorox brand or equivalent)
- 3 quarts warm water or enough to make one gallon

It is advisable to wear rubber gloves and goggles when applying the solution. Scrub with a soft brush, then rinse thoroughly with fresh water. Avoid splashing the solution on shrubbery or grass.

If conditions are right for a new set of mold spores to start growing, another infestation may appear in a few days or weeks. Soon after the surface has been cleaned and dried, a paint recommended by the manufacturer as mildew-resistant should be applied. Supplemental mildewcide can be purchased at most paint stores for mixing into the paint for additional control.

Other Stains: If a stain or discoloration persists after attempting to remove surface dirt or mildew, this waxy or oily accumulation can usually be removed with hot soapy water. A hot detergent solution, applied by brushing or a steam cleaner*, can be used to remove the stain. Rinse with clear water until all traces of detergent are removed. Further detergent steam cleaning may be required if the clear water beads up on the siding or trim surface. The use of a steam cleaner, rather than a cold water pressure spray device, will more effectively remove both dirt and waxy or oily accumulations with less possibility of damaging the siding or trim surface.

*Steam cleaners operating at approximately 300°F and a tip pressure of 200-400 psi have been successfully used. Manufacturer’s instructions and recommendations for a wax stripper or degreaser detergent should be consulted.

How To Select Paint

Purchase a good quality exterior paint that is recommended for use on Engineered Wood siding and trim. Follow the advice of your paint dealer for the products specified for exterior use on Engineered Wood siding and trim.
Refinishing Recommendations

A. Prefinished Siding or Trim With No Defects
To assure good adhesion to the original baked on prefinished coating, it is recommended that a primer be used first, followed by a high quality exterior paint.

B. Previously Field Coated Siding or Trim With No Defects
Finish with a high quality exterior paint.

C. Siding or Trim With Some Defects
If the Engineered Wood siding or trim has any bare spots, paint cracks or waxy or oily accumulations which have been removed, it is recommended that a high quality primer be used first, followed by a high quality exterior paint.

Additional Comments
1. Stain products are not recommended.
2. Clear finishes are not recommended.

If the existing paint has given satisfactory service, it is desirable to use the same kind of paint for repainting. However, if this information is not available, a high quality exterior paint system is generally the best choice. It is desirable to use the same brand of primer and finish paint. This promotes compatibility. If the home is in an area where the siding or trim will frequently get dirty, consider a gloss or semi-gloss paint finish which is easier to clean than flat paint finishes.

When To Reprime Surfaces
Be certain the prime coat is thoroughly dry before proceeding with the finish coat.

It is very important that bare siding or trim and any spots where the topcoat has cracked, checked or peeled, or where waxy and oily accumulations have been removed, be reprimed. A primer specified for Engineered wood siding or trim should be used for all these conditions.

How To Apply the Final Finish

1. The finish coat of paint should be applied in accordance with the recommendations of the paint manufacturer, paying strict attention to proper coverage instructions, temperature at time of painting and other specific requirements.

2. Don’t skimp on material. Coatings that are too thin will not be as durable as those of the right thickness.

3. Two coats of paint are more durable than one thick coat.

4. Avoid painting with latex formulations in very hot, humid weather and/or cool weather when the temperature is likely to drop below 50°F before the paint fully hardens. Certain latex paints are moisture sensitive before fully hardened or cured. Therefore, if fog, dew or rain is anticipated, postpone painting. See manufacturer’s recommendations on the paint can label.

5. Special attention to grooves and drip edges to ensure complete coverage and protection of these critical areas will result in extended life for the siding or trim and in longer intervals between paint jobs.

6. Best results are obtained when using brush application methods. Roller or pad application is less desirable, but satisfactory results can be obtained if the roller or pad is compatible with the finish being applied and care is taken to apply an even coating of proper thickness.

7. If spray application is used, it is especially important to follow the paint manufacturer’s recommendations and to apply a minimum of two coats to ensure good coverage and sealing of the surface. Make sure the drip edges are well coated.

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