

A series of decorative blue lines of varying lengths and orientations, including horizontal, vertical, and diagonal segments, arranged in a stepped, zig-zag pattern across the page.

Maintenance Tips  
for  
**Hardboard Siding**

## General Information

This bulletin is designed to cover the refinishing of Factory prefinished or of Unprimed or Factory primed siding which was field coated at the time of original installation. The American Hardboard Association bulletin on Recommended Basic Application and Painting Instructions for Hardboard Siding should be consulted for initial field coating of unprimed or primed hardboard siding.

Hardboard siding is a reconstituted wood-based building product which has been specifically treated to provide excellent long term resistance to weathering when adequately protected by house paint. Hardboard siding is manufactured by many companies, by many different processes and in a variety of smooth, textured or embossed surfaces. Hardboard siding is sold in three general surface treatments: (1) Unprimed to be field finished after installation; (2) Factory primed to be field finished after installation; (3) Factory prefinished which does not need to be field finished after installation. The siding manufacturer usually provides a specific service warranty for these finishes. 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 three 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. 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 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.

Repainting is sometimes dictated solely for the purpose of changing the color of the home. Frequent repainting can result in excessive paint film thickness build 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 hardboard siding.

## How To Prepare The Surface

1. Remove loose paint material by sanding and careful scraping. It usually is not necessary or desirable to cut or sand into the hardboard surface.
2. To assure paint adhesion on certain glossy type finishes or unweathered areas, it may be necessary to scuff sand these surfaces prior to repainting.
3. Clean the surface of dust and dirt by washing with detergent solution using a suitable scrub brush or pressure spray device, 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. Check for loose or cracked caulking which should be removed and replaced with good quality caulk, one which is flexible and paintable.
6. Dents or gouges can be filled with an exterior grade spackling compound which may be molded to conform with a

textured surface. Use sandpaper to smooth rough or uneven areas. Dents in smooth surface siding are filled slightly higher than the siding, and, when dry, the spackle is sanded flush with the surface.

## 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 fungus 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. A confirmatory test that is useful in the field can be made by applying 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 one. 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
- 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 fairly 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 surface. The use of a steam cleaner, rather than cold water pressure spray device, will more effectively remove both dirt and waxy or oily accumulations with less possibility of damaging the hardboard 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 hardboard siding. "Bargain" paints are rarely genuine bargains because they are usually harder to apply, do not cover well and do not last as long as good quality materials. Follow the advice of your paint dealer for the products specified for coating hardboard siding.

## Refinishing Recommendations

### A. Prefinished Siding With No Defects

To assure good adhesion to the original baked on prefinished coating, it is recommended that a solvent-based oil/alkyd or waterborne primer be used first, followed by a high quality latex or oil paint.\*\*

### B. Previously Field Coated Siding With No Defects

Finish with a high quality latex or oil paint.\*\*

### C. Siding With Some Defects

If the hardboard siding has any bare spots, paint cracks or waxy or oily accumulations which have been removed, it is recommended that a solvent-based oil/alkyd primer be used first, followed by a high quality latex or oil paint.\*\*

\*\* *The oil paint should be a semi or full gloss paint. All paints used should be those recommended by the paint manufacturer for use on hardboard siding.*

Additional Comments

1. Stain products are not recommended.
2. Clear finish are not recommended except for specially designed clear systems to maintain multitone prefinished siding. Consult the siding manufacturer.

If the old 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 latex 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 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

Both solvent-based oil/alkyd and waterborne primers specified for hardboard siding are suitable over sound surfaces. Be certain the prime coat is thoroughly dry before proceeding with the finish coat.

It is very important that bare hardboard and any spots where the topcoat has cracked, checked or peeled, or where waxy and oily accumulations have been removed, be reprimed. A solvent-based oil/alkyd primer specified for hardboard siding 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 of paint.
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 paint can label.
5. Special attention to grooves and drip edges to ensure complete coverage and protection of these critical areas will pay off in extended life for the siding 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.

## About The American Hardboard Association

The American Hardboard Association is the national trade organization representing manufacturers of hardboard products used for exterior siding, interior wall paneling, household and commercial furniture, and industrial and commercial products. AHA serves as the central clearing house on industry and technical information for architects, builders, contractors, distributors, dealers, government agencies and the general public. The Association is concerned with statistical reports, standard/specification programs, research activities, building codes, environmental affairs, educational publications, manufacturing and safety activities, and governmental relations. The Association also administers a quality conformance program for hardboard siding.



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