

The Receding Wood Siding

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As a traditional exterior wall material, wood siding inherently showed their natural and harmonized appearance & historically dominated the building market. But it gave the way to other new emerging sidings due to their high requirement of maintenance and people busy lives in the last 30 years.

Actually, wood siding could last hundred years if properly maintained, which mainly included painting and avoiding moisture and insect damage. Most of these depended on the configuration and construction except painting which should be a regular maintenance by the home owner. Unfortunately, these are seldom done effectively in time. Therefore, most wood siding lost its integrity after 30-50 years in place.



Several days ago, I inspected a 1970s single house with wood siding that is typical. To be fair, the condition is not bad regarding the age of the house but still appears the lack of consideration on building and maintenance. Ex. Figure 1, the new paint cannot cover the rotten end. It would be better to use the whole piece and no butt joints on the vertical applied wood boards. Otherwise, butt joints should be cut on a bevel so the upper board overlaps the lower board and drainage will be by gravity to outside of the joint. Cut ends should be sealed with paint or stain to prevent moisture penetration. Apparently this is not applied on this siding. Although we cannot say this is the cause of this rot, it is a defect for sure. Of course, its position, facing and the fasteners are the entire possible culprit. Again figure 2, the rotten siding end is close to foundation which is the original construction weakness. In order to avoid moisture damage, the siding has to have 6" clearance from the concrete grade or 8" above the soil. Also the approached plants hold the moisture and should be kept away 12" from the siding. Plus the home owner did not paint in time. Generally wood siding is supposed to paint every 5 years or so but there may be earlier failure in the South and West facing. The part under 5 feet should be maintained and fixed regularly due to the above issues and mechanical impact. Ex figure 3, there is no space between the siding and roof underneath, which should have 2" clearance for this wall roof flashing. This is not allowed on roofing. I thought it may be the result of roof replacement from wood shingle to asphalt. Since the plywood has to be added on, the thickness of roof material is more than before. The roofer did not address this flashing accordingly which caused this defect.

Although the stucco, vinyl, metal and fiber cement walls are common on market, there are still lots of wood siding buildings on real estate transaction. It is quite possible to get a better deal even though there is defect of the wood siding. Moreover, I do not suggest replacing the whole wood siding on old buildings. The diligent maintenance & part repair should be good to keep the siding effective & the living space comfort, which does not cost more.