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A Common Sense Approach To Painting

by James R. Ziglinski, C.R.



The other evening I was a guest speaker at a dinner meeting. My topic had to do with the quality of workmanship in today's Home Improvement Industry. An elderly gentleman approached me after my little talk explaining he was disheartened by an exterior painting job that was recently done to his home. The project was completed last August. The job wasn't even a year old and it was peeling to "beat the band," according to him.

I made an appointment to inspect the home and I questioned if the painters used oil or latex paint. He told me it was high quality oil base paint because he supplied the paint. When I got to the home we proceeded to walk around the exterior of the house. I could see where the painters scraped and chipped off the old blistering and peeling paint. They also did a good job of caulking and puttying. The gentleman then proceeded to point out the visible blisters and black spots all over the white siding. I asked if he discussed the preparation with the painters or questioned why the home was peeling so much in the first place. He answered, "No."

I then knew the major reason behind his present peeling problem was not the paint or the painters, per se, but was because nobody was looking for a reason for the source of the peeling problem. Again, as with many discussions I bring out in my columns, this is a "common sense" approach to everything regarding home repairs and improvements. Things do not "just happen."

This painting project is a good example. I pointed out that where the home was scraped this past time the paint was, in fact, still holding fast for now. The present peeling was taking place where no peeling had taken place previously. I also pointed out that the present peeling and blisters were down to the base coat or the raw wood. This information tells me much about this house.

As we continued to walk around the house, I pointed out some possible reasons that were contributing factors to why he had a problem keeping paint on the walls. In his case, location played a big part in the problem. This was an upper east side home, approximately three blocks from the river. It was in a low lying area, heavily wooded. He had bushes around three sides of the house, tight up against the walls. The house had no soffit vents, a black roof with only two small gable end vents. Looking into the windows showed his wife had plants virtually everywhere. I then sat down with him and explained what just this short glance had told me about his home. Without too much detail, it simply was too wet.

He questioned how that could be, since his home was painted at the peak of last year's drought. I referred him back to the present blisters and how they were down so very deep. This indicated to me that the paint was being pushed off the wood from inside the building by moisture trying to escape from inside. I pointed out how his poorly vented black roof with no soffit vents helped to trap moisture behind

the walls inside the building. The plants are also contributing factors of the moisture build-up inside the building. I showed him how the bushes outside were too close to the walls to allow the house to breathe or dry out, and I explained that he should cut them back far enough to be able to walk behind them with ease.

The black spots on the siding are mildew spores, which is a very common problem on east side homes or homes in low lying or wooded areas. The mildew spores are a good indication of high humidity in the area. There are products, such as the mildewcide additives that can be mixed into paint to help eliminate much of the spores. He could understand all of what I was saying and realized how very important proper ventilation is for a home, even for paint. However, he had a hard time trying to accept why this should have happened, since he painted in the drought.

I asked how the paint reacted to the heat during this drought. He explained that the painters kept adding thinner to keep the paint flowing well because it tended to get thick as the day wore on. I mentioned that I thought he had just answered his own query. I explained that the dryers in the paint were evaporating so fast in the heat that the paint barely had time to soak into the pores before they evaporated, causing the paint to dry too fast before it got a chance to bind to the wood properly.

After everything was pointed out to him, he could then understand the reasoning behind all that had happened.

Keep these items in mind when you're ready to paint this year. It's best to call on a professional and have the job done right the first time. It will also save many headaches and other problems down the road. Proper home ventilation and surface preparation are probably the two most important steps to a high quality, lasting paint job.

We hope this information has been helpful to you! If you have any further questions, please visit our website at www.aroundyourhouse.net, or contact Jim at Around Your House.

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