

VINYL SIDING - WATER MANAGEMENT

A poor quality siding job can cause serious damage to your home, including rot and mold, which can go unnoticed until you have a much larger problem. A top quality Vinyl Siding installation starts with details that you don't see. Whether your vinyl siding is installed over your homes sheathing (plywood) or the old wood siding, great care must be taken to protect the wood structure of your home. As the owner of Accent Windows & Doors LLC, I have over 25 years experience installing vinyl siding. In this article I will describe some of the extra steps we take to protect your home.

There is a common misconception about Vinyl Siding. Most people think that the Vinyl Siding itself protects your home from water damage. This is partially true. The Vinyl Siding is only the primary defense to water infiltration. Vinyl siding expands and contracts with temperature changes. For this reason, it is installed loosely to allow for this movement. There are also seams in vinyl siding. Both of these conditions allow wind driven rain to get behind the panels. In certain areas of the home, the use of J-Channels funnel larger amounts of water behind the siding. Therefore, it is crucial to install a well designed secondary layer of defense to protect your home. This is called the Weather Resistant Barrier System (WRB), otherwise known as the Drainage Plane.

The WRB consists of a combination of housewraps or insulation boards, flashing and drip caps. All housewraps, flashing and drip caps must be installed in "weather board fashion", overlapping each layer, working from the bottom to the top. Drip caps are installed over all windows and doors. All seams in the WRB must be sealed with tape designed for that particular WRB.

If the WRB is installed correctly any water that gets behind the siding will run down the wall and drain out at the bottom. For the most part, it is acceptable to have small amounts of water travel down a wall and escape in this manner. However, there are certain areas of a home that are prone to larger amounts of water getting behind the siding. In these areas it's better to divert the water to the exterior of the siding as soon as possible.

J-Channels are used anywhere the siding abuts windows and doors and along roof lines and other areas of your home. These J-Channels are, more or less, mini gutters. A J-Channel over a window, for example, drains water to both sides of the window. Some of the water will escape to the exterior of the siding but a large amount will rundown behind the siding if not diverted. In this situation, a piece of flashing should be placed behind the bottom of the windows side J-Channel and overlap onto the nail flange of the next course of siding below the window. This guarantees all of the water escapes to the exterior through the weep holes in that lower course of siding. See Picture #1 below to illustrate this flashing detail.

Another area of concern is at the intersection where a roofline runs down and terminates in the middle of a wall. Unfortunately this situation is very common and goes unnoticed until serious damage is done as you can see in Picture #2 below.

In this situation the bottom piece of roof flashing (step flashing) should overlap onto the housewrap or insulation board. See Picture #3 below. When installing the piece of Vinyl Siding that covers this step flashing, a slit is cut in the siding that allows the J-Channel to terminate on the exterior of the siding. This detail diverts all of the water running down the roofline J-Channel to the exterior. See Picture #4 below to illustrate this siding detail.

After years on the job, I've seen how much damage can occur to your home if "Water Management" is not considered. I am continually amazed at how few contractors actually perform these crucial steps on their vinyl siding jobs. At Accent Windows & Doors, LLC we take the time to incorporate these hidden details to insure your home is protected inside and out.

Picture #1



Picture #2



Picture #3



Picture #4

