

# Exterior Paint Problems

By Stan Hallett

The coat of paint on the exterior of your home is very important. A fresh coat of paint will raise the curb appeal and the value of your home, as well as protect your house from damaging elements. The main causes of paint failure on the exterior of your home are water, sun, and mold and mildew damage.

## Yearly Inspection

The most important thing you can do to protect the outside of your home is to conduct a yearly inspection of the perimeter of your home. Early detection is the key to prevent major problems in the future.

Look for any imperfections, blemishes, or other flaws that may appear on the paint surface. Check all the painted surfaces on the outside of your house such as cracking, chipping or blistering.

Common areas where these problems occur first are places where there are high levels of direct sunlight, water collection, or other highly exposed areas of your home. Some of these areas include corners, window sills, door sills, and wood butt joints, etc.

## Common Symptoms of Aging or Failing Paint

### Alligatoring



Patterned cracking in the paint film resembling the scales of an alligator. These cracks generally do not expose the substrate. This can be caused by the natural aging of oil-based paints due to temperature fluctuation. The constant expansion and contraction results in a loss of paint film elasticity.

It can be caused by the application of an extremely hard, rigid coating, like oil enamel, over a softer, more flexible coating. It can be caused by application of a topcoat before the primer or basecoat is dry. It can also be caused by application of a coating over a glossy finish.

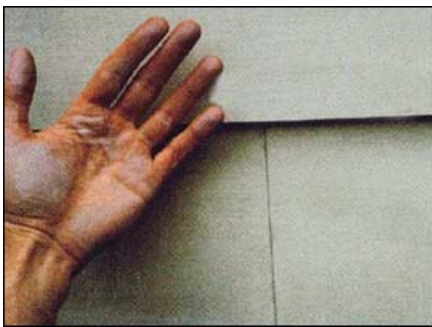
## Blistering Paint



Blistering paint is one of the many symptoms caused by water penetration or extremely high humidity levels. Blistering paint appears as just that: small to medium bubbles or blisters under the paint film, usually occurring on wood surfaces.

Blistering paint may also be caused by the paint being applied to a hot surface. If a coat of paint is applied to a surface when it is too warm, such as heated by direct sunlight, the vapors from the paint may become trapped under the paint film as the paint dries too quickly for it to escape. Similarly, if paint is applied to damp or wet wood, the moisture may become trapped in the same manner. Dew, rain, high humidity, and low quality paint or insufficient preparatory work will also contribute to paint blistering.

## Chalking



Paint chalking occurs as a formation of fine powder on the surface of the paint film. Chalking paint will rub off of the surface and get on to skin, clothing, etc. Chalking paint can also have a fading effect on the paint coat. Chalking is actually a natural cleanses process of paint; however, excessive film erosion can result in heavy chalking.

This problem is typically caused by the use of poor quality paint, or the use of an interior paint on the exterior of the building. Before applying a new coat of paint, be sure to fully remove any excess chalk from the surface. Primer may also be needed.

## Cracking

This is the splitting of a dry paint film through at least one coat. In its early stages, the problem appears as hairline cracks; in its later stages, flaking occurs. Use of a paint that has lower adhesion and flexibility properties. Over-thinning or over-spreading the paint. Inadequate surface preparation, or applying the paint to bare wood without first applying a primer. Excessive hardening and embrittlement of paint as it ages, the coating loses the ability to expand and contract with temperature and humidity changes.

## Efflorescence

This condition most commonly occurs on painted masonry surfaces, such as brick or concrete. Efflorescence appears as crusty white salt deposits emerging through the paint film. This situation transpires when salts in the brick or concrete become dissolved with water, and then attach to the surface as the water evaporates.

Some common causes of paint efflorescence include moisture emanating from indoors, inadequately waterproofed below-ground walls, and poor surface preparation. If basement walls are not adequately waterproofed, ground water may penetrate the paint and induce efflorescence. Cracks in walls and other water damage are also common causes. If the concrete or mortar was not entirely cured and dried out when the paint was applied, or if prior efflorescence was not entirely removed before the last paint job, the condition may materialize.

## **Fading Paint**

Probably the most common problem occurring with aging paint is fading. Constant direct sunlight changes the chemical composition of the paint, leading to a lack of sufficient protection of your home. Highly faded paint can lead to other problems such as cracking or warping of wood. Applying a fresh coat of paint is the only way to fix this problem. Fading or poor color retention can also be a result of chalking of the coating.

## **Mold & Mildew**



A common symptom of failed paint is the appearance of mildew and mold. Mildew is easily recognized as green, grey, brown, or black splotches on the paint surface, and is usually found in damp, shaded areas. Mildew is actually a living fungus which feeds and grows on paint film. Paint does not cause mildew.

Mold spores can float through the air and form new colonies where they land. Mold and mildew have been found to cause several health problems, such as chronic fatigue, sinus problems, respiration problems, sleep difficulty, and an impaired immune system.

Mildew and mold is most commonly caused by heavy moisture, poor ventilation, and lack of sunlight. A combination of these conditions will provide an ideal habitat for mold and mildew to thrive and grow. Some of the most common areas on the exterior of your home where mildew may grow include the underside of soffits, eaves, and similar shaded areas.

## **Peeling Paint**



Another common symptom of a failed paint coat is when the paint peels off from the surface. The paint may commonly appear to curl and flake from the work surface for a number of reasons. Most commonly, the peeling occurs because of

poor paint adhesion, due to improper prep work or lack of primer.

Before any new paint is applied to the exterior of your home, the surface must have the necessary "roughness" for the paint to grip to. Sanding and/or applying a layer of primer are sufficient to provide this "roughness."

There are the primary issues. There are other reasons for paint failure and well as types of stains, too numerous to list or properly identify here. Feel free to call or email if you need help in identifying paint problems and the possible cause, no obligation.



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