

Q. Rejuvenating Aged Drywall

My company is converting a garage with drywall on its walls and ceiling into living space. The joints have been taped with one coat of mud, but some of the tape is dry and loose, and the drywall's paper surface — which was never primed — has darkened and is fuzzy. Can I just apply new compound to the joints and continue the taping process? And is there a primer that should be used with old drywall?

A. *Myron Ferguson, a drywall contractor in Broadalbin, N.Y., and the author of Drywall: Professional Techniques for Walls and Ceilings, responds:* Sunlight — as well as the mere passing of time — will cause the paper face of drywall to yellow or turn darker, a process that begins in less than a week if the drywall is exposed to direct sunlight (see photo).

The color typically bleeds through the compound when seams are taped, and it also bleeds through latex paint.

Seams and fasteners that were taped before the surface turned yellow usually stay whiter, so the newly painted surface becomes streaked.

If a wall or ceiling is not going to be finish-painted soon, it's a good idea to apply a coat of primer over the newly hung drywall, whether it is going to be taped or not. This will prevent the yellowing of the drywall's face paper.

In your situation, you should begin

by removing any loose tape, then sand the surface to remove cobwebs and dirt, and maybe even wash the walls and ceiling with a damp sponge before repairing and finish-taping the drywall.

Next, prime with an oil-based or shellac-type stain-blocking primer; I like to use Kilz (Masterchem Industries, 866/774-6371, www.kilz.com). Since this oil-based primer raises the nap on the paper, you will need to lightly sand the surface when it's dry.

You can then use a latex finish paint over the prime coat, but be sure to give the primer plenty of time to dry first.

Also, when you apply the finish coat, make sure the humidity level is low and that there is plenty of air circulation so it will dry quickly; this will help prevent any more bleeding through.



Q. Borate-Treated Lumber Okay For Mudsills?

I know that some framers are using lumber treated with SBX (sodium borate) as a substitute for ACQ because it is less corrosive to fasteners, but I'm concerned about short-term exposure to rain and the longevity of the borate treatment itself, which could leave the mudsill vulnerable to rot. Are there any other alternatives?

A. *Paul Fiset, director of Building Materials and Wood Technology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a JLC contributing editor, responds:* While borate-treated lumber isn't rated for continuous exposure in wet conditions, it is fine to use it for framing that eventually will be closed up and protected from the elements.

Where there is direct long-term contact with the

soil or water, borates can leach out over time, but SBX lumber that's on a dry concrete foundation and covered by sheathing and siding should remain stable. It won't be significantly affected by exposure to the elements during the construction process, either.

Researchers are focused on developing target-specific biocides with the goal of removing metals from the preservatives and making them less corrosive, but we

will have to wait a while for these new developments to be fully tested and made available.

Meanwhile, borate-treated lumber offers a relatively benign alternative to ACQ-treated wood for many applications, including mudsills. And like the old CCA-treated lumber, it doesn't require stainless steel or hot-dipped galvanized fasteners.

Q. Noisy Expansion Tank

Even though I followed the manufacturer's specifications when I installed the 2-gallon thermal expansion tank and check valve for my customers' domestic hot-water system, they still complain of "clicking" noises, mainly during the heating season. Does the location of the expansion tank (3 horizontal feet from the 50-gallon hot-water heater) and check valve (1½ feet from the water heater on the feed side of the water line) have anything to do with this noise?

A. *Dave Yates, a plumbing contractor in York, Pa., responds:* The placement of the tank and check valve are fine; that ticking sound you hear is coming from thermal stress taking place in the expansion tank as it accepts expanding water.

This problem is likely to be more noticeable during the heating season because that's when there is the greatest difference between inlet and storage temperatures: The greater this difference, the larger the volume that the TXT (a thermal expansion tank rated for 150-psi maximum working pressure and potable water) must accept.

For example, if your customers' incoming water temperature is 40°F (a typical wintertime temperature for most of the country) and the storage temperature is set at 140°F, their 50-gallon water heater will generate as much as .75 gallon of thermal expansion.

A 2-gallon TXT that's been precharged

to match an average incoming water pressure of 70 psi would reach a pressure of 112 psi in this case, but pressure spikes in municipal systems and temperature spikes in storage tanks aren't uncommon, so the actual pressure may be even higher (For more on the relationship between temperature and pressure in a domestic hot-water system, see Q&A, 3/06).

To reduce the noise level, you'll need to reduce stress on the tank, its bladder, and the potable water distribution system by increasing the size of the TXT.

Under the same conditions as the example above, the pressure inside a larger 4.5 TXT would be 84 psi, which would allow plenty of extra capacity for spikes in the water system's temperature and pressure.

Spending a few dollars more on the larger expansion tank should solve the problem.

Q. Woodpeckers and Cedar Siding

We recently completed a house that features vertical T&G cedar siding, but now my clients are complaining about woodpeckers making holes in the siding. Are there any simple techniques for dealing with this problem?

A. *Bert Snyder of Palmetto Exterminators in Charleston, S.C., responds:* If woodpeckers are boring holes in the siding, then either the siding is harboring some type of wood-boring insect that the woodpeckers are hunting for food, or the woodpeckers are drumming on it to establish territory or find a mate (this typically happens in the spring).

To eliminate the food source, treat the siding with an insecticide; you'll find several kinds at your local hardware store or home-and-garden center that should be effective against the kinds of insects found in your area.

You should also be able to find woodpecker repellents. Some formulations are sprayed on; others are designed to be mixed in with paints or stains, for longer-lasting protection.

In addition, a good sealer or coat of paint will make the siding less attractive to both insects and woodpeckers.

But whatever approach you choose, remember that woodpeckers are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; any control methods must not harm the birds.

GOT A QUESTION?

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