

WASHING DIFFERENT SURFACES & SUBSTRATES – ALUMINIUM AND VINYL SIDING

<https://commercialrestorations.com/washing-different-surfaces-substrates-aluminium-and-vinyl-siding/>

The phone rings. A potential customer is calling and asking you for a price to have their building washed.

It is very important for you have a solid sense of the scope of the work to be performed as well as a full understanding what is going to be cleaned and how it should be done. You never want to appear uncertain or unsure of yourself to a customer.

The customer is going to want to know how you are going to clean the exterior as well as many other questions that you will need answers to. The first things we will cover are the types of exteriors and recommendations on how to clean them.

All surfaces are not treated the same way. This is a common mistake of many contractors. Not every exterior gets cleaned with 3000 PSI of water and with no cleaners or chemical solutions. It is also important to know what you are cleaning and how to remove that particular stain or growth. Some cleaners/chemicals will not be effective on one type and very effective on another.

Definition: **Substrate** *The material or substance that is being cleaned*

Definition: **Surface** *The finish or coating that is the exposed face of the substrate being cleaned*

Definition: **Cleaner** *An “action chemical” combined with appropriate surfactants*

Aluminum Siding – Aluminum siding needs periodic cleaning to remove surface oils and stains from tree sap, insecticides, pollutants and growth from mold and mildew, etc. to prolong the life span of the substrate as well as to keep it clean. Aluminum siding does not last forever and typically you will get approximately 20 years before the need to replace or paint the siding. Life spans on aluminum siding (and other types of siding) will depend on maintenance, care, and quality of the product. Aluminum siding can be painted.



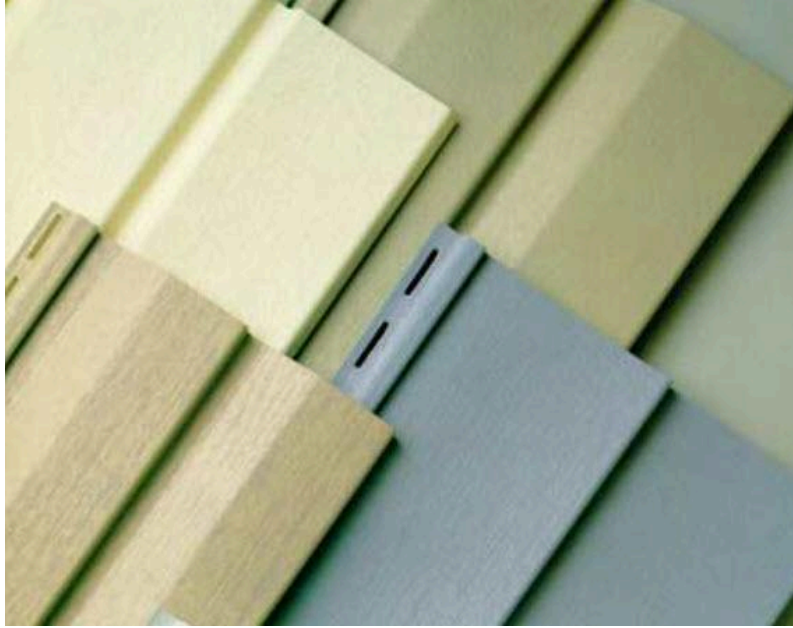
Aluminum siding will deteriorate over time and oxidize. That means that the paint will degenerate and become chalky. Aluminum siding is not forgiving and dents and scratches can be difficult to fix or repair.

There does come a point when the siding has become oxidized enough that the cleaning is merely the first step before painting. A simple test is to run your finger tips across the siding. If the chalkiness comes off on your fingertips this is a job you may not want to do. Keep in mind that if you remove the oxidized layer the surface may appear blotchy. When this occurs the aluminum siding likely has to be painted or replaced. The key to success is to set the customer's expectations and educate them about the issues and the potential that the siding may need painting. This will help them make an informed decision as to whether or not to move forward with the cleaning.

There are coatings available other than paint which are designed to renew oxidized surfaces. These are seldom useful for aluminum siding because the siding does not oxidize evenly.

NOTE: This is typically where new contractors make a big mistake. They wash the surface without discussing the possible outcome with the customer. The result is streaks and stripes all over the siding. This makes for an unpleasant conversation and often results in non-payment.

Vinyl Siding – Vinyl siding was introduced in the early 1960's and is more durable and easier to clean and maintain than aluminum siding. The U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that twice as many homeowners are siding their homes with vinyl siding over any other material. Vinyl siding, in good condition, is probably the most forgiving surface to clean in residential power washing. Most vinyl siding is designed with a wood grain texture in order to look like wood which can cause it to hold dust and mildew spores easily. Unlike other siding materials, vinyl is almost impervious to rain, ice, salt and snow. Vinyl siding is commonly sold as a maintenance free product because it won't rot, dent or scratch under normal conditions. Vinyl siding needs periodic cleaning to remove surface soils and stains from tree sap, insecticides, pollutants, and growth from mold and mildew, and more. Regular cleaning prolongs the life span of the product and keeps it looking nice. Vinyl siding does not last forever and has an approximate 20-year life span. Vinyl siding also will oxidize and become chalky under normal circumstances. Vinyl siding may be cleaned with a soft bristle brush. Long handle brushes are ideal and time saving. A pressure washer may also be used but with strict policies as to not void a manufacturer



recommendation or warranty.

Heat – Vinyl siding is affected by (and will usually distort at) temperatures of about 160° to 165°F. If you use hot water, we suggest maintaining the temperature no warmer than 110°. Vinyl siding is combustible and therefore you should use caution to avoid having your hot equipment too near the siding.

*NOTE: It is very important for those that use hot water pressure washers to be very careful not to have the burner set to high. A good rule of thumb to follow is: **“The least amount of pressure, the weakest chemical solution, and the least amount of heat to get the job done is best!”** Do not raise the pressure too high, do not use a chemical solution that is too strong, and do not have the heat setting too high as to cause damage that in most cases can not be repaired.*

Stains – You should always inspect the siding prior to cleaning and note with the homeowner any existing stains. Vinyl siding does stain and often has stains from deck sealers and stains, insecticide and herbicide stains, rust stains, etc. that may be issues. Some stains will disappear, some will diminish, and others will not change depending on factors such as what the stains is and how long it has been on the siding.

Painting – Vinyl siding can be painted. You should consult with the siding manufacturer first, however, since it will often void any existing warranty.

There are coatings available other than paint which are designed to renew oxidized surfaces. These can be a good solution for oxidized vinyl siding.

[Commercial Restorations](https://commercialrestorations.com) provides a variety of cleaning services in Maryland D.C area.

via Commercial Restorations <https://commercialrestorations.com>

March 29, 2019 at 07:24AM