

Thinking about painting your exterior? Read this first.

In Minnesota, exterior paint isn't decoration — it's the weatherproofing your siding lives behind. Done right, it protects the house for years. Done fast, it peels by the second winter. Here's what separates the two, and what to consider before you book anyone.

Paint, stain, or repair first?

Paint

For previously painted or primed siding and trim. A film-forming finish — the strongest weather protection, and the widest color choice.

Solid stain

Looks like paint, behaves like stain — a favorite for wood siding because it moves with the wood and fails gracefully instead of peeling. We use Sherwin-Williams WoodScapes.

Repair first

Rotten boards, failed caulk, and moisture problems have to be fixed before coating — paint over rot is just expensive rot. An honest assessment comes before any color talk.

What the process actually looks like

- 1 Consultation & inspection.** We walk the whole house looking for peeling, rot, failed caulk, and moisture — the things that actually decide the scope.
- 2 Wash.** The house is washed so coatings bond to clean siding, not to chalk and mildew.
- 3 Prep.** Loose paint scraped and sanded, bare spots primed, gaps and joints re-caulked, failing boards flagged for replacement.
- 4 Coat.** Sprayed and back-rolled with premium Sherwin-Williams exterior lines — Duration, Latitude, or Emerald — chosen for your siding and exposure.
- 5 Walkthrough.** Every elevation, checked with you in natural light.

Timing matters. Exterior coating needs the right temperature window and dry siding — in Minnesota the reliable season runs spring through fall, and a good contractor will refuse to paint into weather that will kill the finish.

Things to consider before you decide

- **Peeling is a symptom.** Paint lets go for a reason — moisture, sun, or a skipped primer last time. Coating over the cause guarantees a repeat performance.
- **Dark colors are a commitment.** They look sharp and absorb heat, which works siding and caulk harder. On some sidings, color choice also affects the warranty — ask before you fall for a near-black.
- **Check your HOA and your neighbors.** Some associations approve palettes; a heads-up to the house next door about ladders and overspray control is just good manners.
- **Landscaping is part of the job.** Beds, plantings, decks, and AC units should be covered or tied back by the crew — ask how, before day one.
- **Older homes: ask about lead.** Houses built before 1978 can have lead paint. Ask any contractor how they handle it — the answer should be specific, not a shrug.
- **Trim and doors finish the story.** Body color gets the glory, but crisp trim and a front door in a deliberate color are what make the house look designed.

Do this

- Walk the property with your painter and point at problem areas together
- Ask what happens if rotten boards turn up mid-job — before the job
- Test body color on the sun side AND the shade side
- Ask which surfaces get primer, specifically

Skip this

- Painting over active rot or wet siding
- Booking the crew that can 'start tomorrow' in peak season without asking why
- Skipping the wash to save a day — adhesion is everything
- Choosing color from a photo of someone else's house at sunset

Five questions to ask any exterior painter

- What prep is included — washing, scraping, sanding, caulking, priming?
- Which product are you putting on my siding, and why that one?
- How do you handle rotten boards or other surprises you find?
- What weather would make you pause the job — and who decides?
- What does your warranty cover, in writing?

Exterior work is protection first and color second. Hire accordingly.

In the southwest Twin Cities metro?

Schedule your **FREE consultation** — we'll walk your house with you and tell you honestly what it needs — and what it doesn't.

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