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HOME SOLUTIONS



## Siding Comparison Guide 2011/2012

A Free Resource Provided by:

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# Siding Comparison Guide

## Introduction:

Updating your home is a significant investment and you have made a wise decision to get more information before making this choice. To help I have developed this siding guide and please remember if you have any questions on this topic give me a call.

Buresh Home Solutions, Inc has been helping homeowners transform the exterior of their homes for nearly 9 years. We have installed all types of siding (cladding) including composite, polymer, vinyl, insulated vinyl, wood, stone, and fiber cement for hundreds of central Iowa homeowners. We have also performed repairs due to a variety of reasons including correcting installation errors and product failures for homeowners who utilized other installers. This experience has challenged us to continually look for the best possible siding for our customers' needs. We are always looking at the changing siding industry and seeing what the marketplace is doing and/or telling us, so that we can make the best possible recommendations to our customers.

One common problem that we notice when meeting with prospective siding customers is the amount of misinformation they have been given by those who are simply interested in selling a siding job just to make a quick buck. Just as concerning is how many home owners hire a contractor for the wrong reason or don't take the time to educate themselves and in the end are very disappointed when they learn that they have no warranty protection because the product was improperly installed or that the promises the siding sales person made about the product were false, misleading or empty promises.

Our reputation is built on taking care of people whether they become a customer or not. Since the re-siding of your home is one of the most important and costly projects you can undertake, I have developed this guide to help you navigate through the process and ultimately make the right long-term choice. Not only will this choice enhance the time you and your family spend enjoying your home, but it will also have a positive effect on the resale value of your home, increase the curb appeal and pride you experience each time you enter your driveway, and impact the total life cost of your newly replaced siding.

In this siding comparison guide we hope to offer some insight into the different types of siding, features and benefits (their pros and cons), warranty information, installation and contractor selection assistance.

When re-siding your home in Iowa there are some key things you should consider. By considering these things you will likely make the right long-term choice for your home's exterior improvement.

1. Maintenance
2. Aesthetics
3. Climate/Environment
4. Warranty
5. Installation Methods
6. Finding the Right Contractor
7. Life Cost

**Quick Note: I would say that for most homeowners the maintenance and aesthetics are of equal importance. When visiting with prospective customers in our showroom we typically ask, what is most important to you when selecting siding for you home? Here are the most common responses:**

**I do not want to paint ever again.**

**I don't like the look of vinyl.**

**I want no-maintenance cement board. (Watch out if you are told "no maintenance" is possible – That's false!)**

**I want the natural look of wood.**

**As you can see there are many times where aesthetics and maintenance are in competition with each other between the different types of siding.**

### **Aesthetics:**

When discussing with customers what kind of look they want upon completion, most of the responses will fall into the following areas.

1. The natural look of wood
2. A Seamless Look
3. A finish that doesn't fade

### **The natural look of wood:**

This question is one of the most important it seems, to easily 50% of our customers. Many homeowners have resigned themselves to the fact that if they want a low maintenance house it will come at the expense of aesthetics and curb appeal. The siding industry has always wanted to create a low maintenance siding product, but low maintenance typically comes at the expense of beauty as I mentioned earlier. For the past 20 years fiber cement siding has paved the way with realistic wood-like clapboards that have lower maintenance properties than wood, though they still require some maintenance and painting. Smartside offers an engineered product that competes with the fiber cement siding for those customers who are looking for the natural look of wood.

Vinyl doesn't have the same natural wood look as some other products. During the installation certain trim pieces must be used that you typically don't see with wood siding. The double 4"

clapboard profile is the most common profile, and this in itself for some customers eliminates vinyl from consideration. This fact does seem to be regional because I just talked to a Marketing Manager for a large home improvement contractor in New England and he said the 4" profile is by far the most popular there.

The vinyl siding industry has responded by creating a Double 6 or 7" clapboard profile to directly compete with the composite, wood and fiber cement products. This look has become more popular in recent years as more and more homeowners have been introduced to it. With the larger board width it does get closer to the natural look of wood.

Steel and aluminum siding also run into some of the same problems as vinyl including the fact that the 4" profiles are again the most common. Steel siding also tends to have more shine than natural wood.

Everlast Polymer Cladding brings together the best of all of these features together in a product that looks like natural cedar.

**Quick Hint (Another instance where the best of fiber cement meets the best of vinyl) – When purchasing siding it is also very important to discuss current condition of the walls which will be re-sided. Fiber cement, wood and engineered wood products all have to be hard nailed meaning they will mirror the current conditions of the wall. So if you have an uneven wall these products will not make the waviness go away; the re-sided wall will also wavy. Vinyl and Everlast can be “floated” (when installed by a good siding contractor) to hide some of the waviness, resulting in a better, smoother look.**

#### **Siding Seams:**

When choosing a siding product, make sure you consider how the seams between 2 pieces of siding are addressed. The manner in which the siding is connected can dramatically affect the appearance of the completed siding project.

Vinyl, aluminum and steel siding seams are overlapped. Vinyl, aluminum and steel are typically only .50 mil thick or less (that's only about as thick as a credit card) and therefore should not be installed end-to-end. Part of the problem for these types of siding is their need to account for expansion and contraction; and an end-to-end, rather than overlapped, installation will cause seams to open and close.

Traditional wood, *Everlast* Polymer cladding, fiber cement and engineered clapboard sidings are lined up butt end to butt end and sometimes sealed with caulking, or with seam covers, or just butted together depending on the type of siding being installed. All of this typically happens before the siding, that needs to be painted is in fact painted.

**Great Idea: Seeing is better than reading this. Call our showroom and set-up a time so I can show you the different seam treatments up close. (515) 274-2957.**

Because of the thicker panels and the minimal expansion and contraction of these more rigid siding products and their seam treatment, Everlast Polymer cladding, fiber cement, and engineered clapboard will look like more natural wood than the products that have overlapped seams.

### **Fading:**

OK this has to be one of the most oversold things in our industry. If you are ever told that siding or paint will not fade in Iowa then you need to seriously doubt if the person selling you the product is knowledgeable enough to install the product properly.

In Iowa all things will FADE eventually! The degree of fading depends on a lot of factors including quality of product, coatings used etc. Some types of vinyl siding is protected from excessive fading in their warranties. This warranty is usually described in relation to a number of "hunter" units or color change that are acceptable. Premium vinyl sidings have additives in them to help protect against fading, which has also created the ability to create deeper colors. Another case where "vinyl is vinyl" myth appears and cheaper is better is proven wrong. There are significant differences between different types of vinyl siding.

Fiber cement, wood, engineered wood, and cedar sidings are all painted or stained. We all know that eventually to maintain the color or just-painted look they will need to be painted or stained again periodically. How often does your deck need resealing? Maybe this comparison is a little extreme, but the point is that all products that are painted or stained will need to be re-painted or re-stained regularly in order to keep that freshly painted look.

*Everlast* Polymer Cladding is finished with "ColorHold", a UV-Stable Acrylic Polymer with excellent fade resistance properties. In fact its lifetime warranty against fading is the strongest in the industry.

### **Climate/Environment:**

Other factors to consider when deciding what siding will meet your needs would be the impact resistance and moisture absorption of the different types of cladding. These two elements will have the most potential of causing additional expenditures in the future along with more frequent painting/staining cost for people that choose that route. Any product made from or containing wood has an inherent risk of moisture absorption in Iowa. One very common misconception we run into each and every day is in regards to fiber cement. Fiber cement does contain wood and can, and will rot and crumble when exposed to moisture. There have been many instances of fiber cement products failing. Whether this is due to installation or product I am sure will get figured out over time. Moisture absorption of layered products will cause paint peeling, deterioration, and delamination. .

Unlike products that contain wood, vinyl and *Everlast* Polymer Cladding contain no wood or wood fibers and cannot absorb water that can lead to failure, warping or other damage.

The resistance to impact damage is also important because in Iowa we will inevitably experience hail, wind, ice, rocks, other projectiles and even the occasional golf ball.

Not only will these things cause damage, but they may also cost you time and money depending on the product you choose. Painted products may hold up to the impact but will often show a chip in the painted surface thus revealing the off-color material underneath the paint.

## **Maintenance:**

### **Wood Siding/Fiber Cement Maintenance**

For decades a homeowner's only option to get the true natural look of wood was wood siding or products containing wood fibers, like fiber cement. And homeowners had no choice but to repaint their home every 5 to 10 years. Some homeowners have opted to hire a painter and easily dished out \$3,000-\$10,000 for a single paint job, only to have to do it again later.

**Quick Note: As the EPA continues to regulate paint products and painting practices, house painting has become drastically more expensive. With even stricter lead paint laws being proposed, the cost of painting will continue to rise rapidly. We have actually had to make the choice as a business to not paint homes built before 1978 because of the extreme requirements that need to be adhered to, which drastically raise time and labor costs and we were finding to many others were willing to look past the laws, thus able to do it much cheaper.**

Fiber Cement, wood and engineered wood products usually require more than just painting they also require caulking to be maintained properly. Cracks, dents, and other imperfections usually need to be filled with sealant.

**Quick Hint: We will discuss this in more detail later, but it is important that home owners read the warranties for all products being considered. Avoid disappointment later by being fully informed later.**

### **Vinyl Siding and Everlast Polymer Cladding Maintenance**

These types of siding definitely require less maintenance than their wood or wood fiber counterparts. Touch-up painting is not necessary. For vinyl siding depending on the grain and quality of product a garden hose cleaning or power washing will take care of it. Also, consider how often it is true with vinyl siding that "the longer you wait, the more work it will be."

*Everlast* Polymer Cladding with its "CedarTouch" embossing only requires a garden hose cleaning to get back to its original look. Easy and inexpensive.

## **Finding the Right Contractor!**

### **Better Business Bureau**

Take the time to check the BBB file for all companies you considering.

### **Licensing and Insurance**

Make sure that all insurance and licensing is current for the contractor you choose. You can also search you State Court Systems Public records to see if the contractor has had legal issues associated with their business that might negatively affect them or prevent them from successfully completing your job.

### **References**

Make sure that you talk to past customers for each company you are considering. In fact, it may be very beneficial see at least 3 jobs up close that have been completed by each of the companies you are considering.



### **Warranties**

Make sure that all products carry a manufacturer's warranty  
INSPECT CAREFULLY ALL WARRANTIES. DO NOT TAKE SOMEBODY'S WORD ON WHAT THEY COVER.

### **Do not pay any money up front! Ever!**

### **Talk to the Owner (if dealing with local companies) or General Manager (if dealing with national companies).**

Too many times homeowners find themselves in a conflict between what the sales person said and what the installer later says can be done and then are disappointed because what they were expecting didn't ultimately happen. The only way to protect yourself is to talk to the person who is ultimately responsible for the completion of the job. (the owner or the general manager)

### **Become an educated consumer!**

There are lots of resources available online to make sure you understand the differences in products so you can confidently make sure you are making useful comparisons (apples to apples).

Take time to see how the products you are considering are rated by independent third party organizations.

Make sure that you have done a thorough walk-through of the job and are confident you understand exactly what is going to happen and how the job will progress.

### **Warranties:**

I can't say this too often! The first thing I always stress about warranties is that you ask for a copy of the actual warranty for the products you are considering. Spending 10 minutes reading the warranty you can save you from headaches in the future. Sales people in our industry sometimes over sell the warranty protection a home owner will receive upon completion of the project.

Almost all warranties specifically state that they are only valid if the product is installed properly. This fact makes it very important to select the right contractor to install the product. There are many horror stories out there about home owners having problems with a product and being told that it isn't covered under warranty because it wasn't installed according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Quick Hint: For vinyl siding you can protect yourself a little more by making sure that you use a Certified Installer. Unlike fiber cement, engineered wood or steel siding the vinyl siding industry does have a certification program that trains and test installers to make sure they understand how to properly install vinyl siding. You can visit [www.vinylsiding.org](http://www.vinylsiding.org) to search for certified installers in your area or to make sure the company you are considering does have certified installers.

Other points to consider when comparing warranties would be the following:

- How long is the warranty protection? Is it pro-rated during that time?
- Are materials and labor included?
- Can the warranty be transferred? Is there a procedure and cost to transfer it?
- Is hail damage covered under the warranty?
- Is there fade protection included in the warranty?

These are just some of the basic questions that may help when comparing different projects. Again simply by reading the warranties you will have a good sense of the differences in coverage and you will understand that with some types of siding there are also maintenance, storage and installation requirements to ensure you have the warranty protection when you need it.

### **Long-Term Value:**

When considering what type of siding you are going to have installed another important consideration is the total life cost of the product. Obviously the initial, up-front cost is important when budgeting and deciding on the best possible product for your home.

Throughout this guide there have been points made about maintenance for particular products and that is definitely an important consideration. Taking a long-term approach may be beneficial because although a particular product may cost less upfront, in the end it may end up being more for the time you live in your home. For example fiber-cement siding or any type of siding that needs to be painted will incur additional cost in the future. When this cost is incurred depends on environmental or installation conditions. The quality of craftsmanship will have a lot to do with the product's longevity and performance. If the original paint job was done poorly or the siding was poorly installed and protected, then the time frame for incurring additional cost will be short. It will happen sooner than you expect or plan for.

**FYI – When comparing *Everlast* Polymer cladding and fiber cement you may want to consider the fact that if you have to paint your house even once you will most likely end up paying more long-term than you would if you had originally installed the *Everlast* product.**

Also, since vinyl and *Everlast* do not have specific requirements as to maintenance because they are not painted you will incur less cost later. Actually the cost of the water used to wash your siding may be the only cost incurred. Warranties also come into this conversation as well. For example if material is covered, but not labor, and you ever do have a claim you, will be responsible for some of the cost of repairing or replacing the damaged siding. Many people just assume that when warrantied it means that future problems will be fixed at no cost to them.

Does the product add long-term value to your house? Another important area to consider may be the resale value of the different products. When selling your home it is important to understand that many home buyers are looking for a home that requires less maintenance. In these cases *Everlast*, vinyl and steel will offer the biggest advantage. For other prospective buyers being able to change the color because the current color wouldn't have been their first choice is important. In these instance *Everlast* again is a good choice and also fiber-cement or an engineered wood product. Then there is also the aesthetics of the siding that is very important to some buyers. They want the natural look of wood. For these buyers *Everlast*, fiber cement or engineered wood and even 6" or 7" insulated vinyl will be the better choices.

**Hint – For additional information of resale values visit [www.costvsvalue.com](http://www.costvsvalue.com) for a yearly look at resale values of different types of home improvement projects provided by the National Association of Realtors.**



Since many prospective buyers are also concerned about the long-term value of energy efficiency, you may want to consider siding products or installations that provide some insulation. Insulated vinyl, vinyl, steel and *Everlast* can offer some benefits in this area.

**Conclusion:**

In the end there are many choices to be made and many features and benefits to consider in finding the best possible siding product for your needs. When considering contractors it can be very beneficial to talk with a company who that has experience with all of the different siding types because they can then help you pick the best product and won't be focused so much on selling you a particular product.

Please feel free to contact me any time, if I can be of any assistance in the future. I can be reached at (515) 274-2957 or email me at [brian@bureshhomesolutions.com](mailto:brian@bureshhomesolutions.com). For additional information you can also visit our web page at [www.bureshhomesolutions.com](http://www.bureshhomesolutions.com).

(Our design center/showroom has a house and all of the products discussed in this guide on display. As always there is no-obligation to visit and hopefully your stop will help you make an informed and financially sound decision – located at 9379 Swanson Blvd Suite D, Clive, IA)