

Seattle's wet winters and long shoulder seasons are merciless on exterior cladding. I've seen brand-new fiber cement turn blotchy from improper priming and nail heads telegraph through cedar within the first year because the rainscreen gap was skipped. Picking a siding contractor here isn't just about price, it's about who understands moisture, flashing details, and how to stage a project in a climate where forecasts change by lunchtime. If you're sorting through quotes from siding contractors in Seattle, WA, here's how to read between the lines and choose for durability, not just curb appeal.

What the Climate Demands From a Siding Job

Seattle averages around 150 rainy days a year, with long stretches of damp weather that can push moisture behind siding. That reality affects every decision, starting with the substrate. OSB that's been wet and sealed in can lead to trapped vapor, paint failure, and ultimately dry rot repair. The best installers here design for drying and drainage: continuous WRB with taped seams, properly lapped flashing, kick-out flashings where roofs meet walls, and a ventilated rainscreen. On older homes [dry rot removal service](#) where we do House trim repair and exterior trim repair, I look for early signs of water staining at the bottom corners of windows, darkened sheathing near deck ledgers, and swollen trim at belly bands. Those clues tell you the scope before you open up a wall.

The species and finish matter too. Primed cedar can be beautiful, but it needs a disciplined maintenance plan. Fiber cement handles the climate better if installed to spec and caulked correctly, and engineered wood panels have improved, though edge sealing is critical. Vinyl is less common in the city due to aesthetics and wind concerns near the Sound, but it appears on budget projects. No material compensates for bad details. A perfect board with a missing Z-flash will rot a sill just the same.

Apples-to-Apples Quotes: What a Good Bid Includes

When I review multiple bids for siding replacement services Seattle WA homeowners request, I start by aligning scope. One contractor may include full tear-off, sheathing repair allowances, and a rainscreen, while another assumes over-clad and a bead of caulk. [dry rot repair](#) The numbers can be thousands apart and still reflect the same quality, or only a fraction of the work.

The most reliable quotes spell out line items. You should understand whether the price covers removal and disposal of old cladding, any Seattle dry rot inspection or exploratory cuts, WRB and flashing brand, trim species and profiles, paint or stain, and final cleanup. If a contractor plans to reuse fascia or corner boards, you should see that noted, and you should see pricing for Seattle trim repair if removal reveals hidden damage. A Dry rot repair contractor often builds a contingency line, say 10 to 20 percent for sheathing or framing repairs. It prevents change orders from turning hostile later.

Permitting and HOA approvals also vary. In Seattle proper, most siding jobs without structural changes don't need a full building permit, but you still have to follow energy code for house wrap and flashing, and you may need a simple over-the-counter permit if scaffolding occupies public right-of-way. A contractor accustomed to Seattle's process will include that planning, and they should carry liability insurance and workers' comp. Ask for a certificate, not just a line on the bid.

The Rainscreen Question You Should Ask

The clearest litmus test of a contractor's Seattle expertise is how they talk about rainscreens. A rainscreen is a small ventilation and drainage gap behind your siding, achieved with battens, furring strips, or a mesh mat. In this city, that gap is the difference between a wall that can shed incidental water and one that soaks for months.

I still see bids where the installer plans to fasten fiber cement tight to the WRB. That may be allowed by the material, but it's not the best practice here. Even a 3/8 inch air space with bug screen at the bottom and venting at the top dramatically reduces risks. I've opened fifteen-year-old walls with rainscreens and found bright, clean sheathing, while adjacent over-clad sections showed blackened OSB and a smell you don't forget. If two quotes are close and only one includes a rainscreen, the answer is simple.

Reading Material Choices the Right Way

If you compare bids from siding contractors in Seattle, the material lines can look interchangeable but rarely are. Here's what I look for in the spec sheet:

- Fiber cement: brand, profile, factory primed versus ColorPlus, specified nail type, joint treatment (PVC splines or metal H-strips), and back flashing at butt joints. I prefer joint flashing plus minimal caulk, not long caulk seams that fail and look chalky after a few seasons.
- Cedar or other wood: grade and grain orientation, whether boards come pre-primed on all faces, back-priming on site, end-grain sealing policy, and fastener material. Stainless steel nails cost more, but I've seen galvanized fasteners bleed into cedar within two winters.
- Engineered wood: warranty terms require very specific clearances above grade and rooflines, plus primed cuts. I want to see a plan for drip edges and belly bands because swelling starts at the horizontals.
- Trim: Many crews mix PVC and wood. PVC against the ground resists splash-back. For House trim repair on older craftsman details, dense finger-jointed wood and thorough priming can match profiles better. The plan should show how window returns and sills are handled, including metal head flashings.

A contractor who sells a particular brand aggressively might be doing so for rebates, not always for your conditions. Ask for the pros and cons in your situation, then look at houses they've built with that material five or more years ago. If they hedge when you request addresses, that tells you enough.

The Labor You're Actually Buying

Siding is an assembly, not a product. You're paying for structure, sequencing, and judgment. The foreman's experience shows up in simple decisions, like starting on the least visible elevation so minor quirks get tuned before the front facade. It shows up when rain is forecast and the crew chooses to stage demo in zones they can re-wrap the same day, rather than leaving your sheathing exposed.

Ask who will be on site. Some companies run a tight in-house team; others sub everything to rotating crews. Neither is automatically bad. What matters is consistent supervision and a single person accountable to you. I prefer to meet the project manager who will sign off on flashing before siding goes on. I want to hear that they photograph details: at windows after pan flashing, at ledger interfaces, at horizontal band flashings. Those photos are a quality record and resolve disputes later.

Painting is another linchpin. If the siding crew and the painter haven't worked together, the schedule can slip, paint can go on damp boards, or caulk lines can get sloppy and fill the intended expansion gaps. On fiber cement, I wait until moisture readings are reasonable, then prime cut edges and caulk sparingly. Over-caulked joints look clean for a week, then collect dirt and crack. The best crews understand restraint.

Price Ranges That Make Sense in Seattle

Costs vary with access, material, and scope. You'll see wide swings in quotes that reflect not just profit but time and risk. As a ballpark, full tear-off and replacement with fiber cement and new trim on a typical two-story, 2,000 to 2,400 square foot home in Seattle often lands somewhere between 25 to 45 dollars per square foot of wall area for labor and materials, with wood siding running higher when you factor in finishing. If you add a rainscreen, upgraded flashing, and premium paint, push toward the top. If the job requires extensive seattle dry rot repair, window replacement, or structural corrections at decks, the total can climb from the mid five figures to low six figures.

For targeted siding repair Seattle homeowners call about, such as a failed south wall or lower story only, expect a higher per-square-foot figure, since mobilization and protection costs don't scale down linearly. Dry rot repair Seattle projects can be hard to price until the wall is open. I usually budget an allowance for sheathing replacement by the sheet and framing by the linear foot, then reconcile once demolition reveals the reality.

How to Compare Three Bids Without Getting Lost

I like to build a simple comparison grid. Not fancy, just the key variables that actually change performance. If you want to create one, include scope, materials, rainscreen, flashing details, trim approach, paint plan, contingencies, timeline, and warranty. Pay attention to exclusions. A low number sometimes hides missing scaffolding or off-hours noise restrictions in tight neighborhoods. If the bid omits kick-out flashings, chimney counterflashing, or belly-band flashings, add the cost mentally because you will need them.

Timeline is part of quality. Seattle's weather window for exterior paint is narrower than inland areas. A contractor who promises a three-week turnaround in a rainy month without explaining their weather plan probably isn't telling you the

whole story. I prefer a bid that explains how they phase work to keep the house dry if the forecast breaks bad. Tenting and heat can help, but costs rise fast, so staging becomes the craft.

The Importance of Investigation Before You Sign

Before greenlighting a siding replacement, I like to do surgical exploration. That can be a few 4 by 4 inch cuts at suspect locations, such as beneath a leaking light fixture or at the lower corners of a big window. The cost is minor, and it tells you whether the allowance for seattle dry rot repair is fantasy or realistic. You'll also see whether your WRB was installed shingle-style originally or taped flat. If you find interleaved tar paper with reverse laps, budget to rewrap completely once opened.

On trim and siding repair, particularly exterior trim repair around older windows, it's common to find no pan flashing at all. Water will have stained below the sill and migrated sideways into the sheathing. Plan for a proper sill pan and head flashing with end dams. A contractor who shrugs and says "we'll caulk it" is not your contractor.

Warranty Language That Feels Honest

Warranties in this industry can be either meaningful or marketing. A ten-year workmanship warranty sounds solid until you realize it excludes anything related to water intrusion because of "structural movement" or "material behavior." I prefer short, direct language that covers flashing and water management for at least five years, with clear owner responsibilities such as maintaining caulk and paint. Manufacturer warranties are only as good as the installation documentation, so keep your receipts and take a few photos during the build. Good siding contractors in Seattle will maintain a file with your project details, including the batch numbers for fiber cement and the exact caulks and sealants used.

Red Flags I've Learned to Spot

A few behaviors predict headaches. If a contractor pushes to skip WRB replacement because "the old paper is fine," that's a hard stop. If they refuse to install kick-out flashings because "it looks ugly," expect water to punch through stucco or lap siding at that roof-to-wall intersection within a few seasons. If they're happy to caulk the bottom of horizontal belly bands tight to the siding, they're trapping water. And if they don't own a moisture meter, they're guessing. In Seattle, guessing ends with dry rot repair and stained interior drywall.

A less obvious red flag is pricing that ignores access complications. Tight lots with minimal side yards require narrow scaffolding or creative staging. If the bid doesn't reflect that, someone will be cutting corners to make the numbers work.

Coordinating With Other Exterior Work

Siding rarely lives alone. Many projects include window or door upgrades, deck ledger corrections, or roof work. Sequence matters a lot. Ideally, replace windows just before siding, so the new flanges integrate cleanly with the fresh WRB and flashing. If a roof replacement is coming, coordinate kick-out flashing details so the roofer and sider aren't undoing each other's work. On seattle trim repair around historic homes, match the trim profiles early and confirm availability. Custom knife runs for casing profiles can take weeks.

If your project includes a new deck, insist on proper ledger flashing integrated with the WRB, plus a gap between the siding and deck surfaces. The number of rot repairs I've done where the siding sat directly against the deck is its own cautionary tale.

What Good Communication Looks Like During the Job

Nothing about this work is truly set-and-forget. Moisture surprises appear once cladding comes down. The difference between a smooth project and a tense one is how quickly the crew brings you into the loop and how they price the fix. I encourage homeowners to request daily updates, even if it's just a few photos and a note about tomorrow's plan. If the job pauses for rain, that should come with a surface protection check and a revised schedule, not silence.

Expect dust and debris, especially during demolition. A conscientious crew protects plantings, covers adjacent roofs and patios, and cleans daily. When they hit hidden dry rot, they should show you the damage, propose a defined fix with a cost range, and document the repair before re-wrapping. That transparency protects both sides.

The Case for Surgical Repairs vs Full Replacement

Not every house needs full replacement. If your paint is sound and moisture readings are normal, a localized trim and siding repair can buy years. I often perform seattle trim repair at window sills and corner boards where splash-back and capillary action are worst. The trick is to understand why it failed. If the underlying WRB and flashing were never correct, a patch is a bandage. For a south wall baked by sun and hammered by wind-driven rain, a targeted replacement with upgraded WRB and a rainscreen can be strategic while you budget for the rest.

A partial job may come with aesthetic seams, especially if you can't match profile or factory color exactly. Decide where you can live with that. On lap siding, a clever installer can hide transitions behind vertical trim or at inside corners to reduce the visual impact.

Realistic Timelines and Weather Workarounds

On a typical two-story home, a well-staffed crew might need two to four weeks for full replacement, not counting paint curing time. In the wet months, entire days can be lost to rain, so you want a contractor who stages demo in smaller sections, uses temporary wraps, and protects open edges with taped flashing. Some crews tent and heat, especially for winter painting, but you pay for that setup, and it still has limits. If you must proceed in the rainy season, plan for a slower pace and more vigilance.

I keep a running weather contingency in the schedule. It sets expectations and removes fiction from the calendar. If a contractor promises a fixed two-week completion in November, ask how they handle the nine days of rain that month.

A Simple, Focused Checklist for Comparing Bids

- Scope clarity: tear-off, WRB, rainscreen, trim, paint, disposal, and contingencies spelled out.
- Water management details: pan and head flashings, kick-out flashings, Z-flashings at horizontal breaks.
- Materials and methods: brand, finish, fasteners, joint treatment, back-priming or end-grain sealing.
- Supervision and documentation: named project lead, daily photos of critical details, moisture measurements.
- Warranty and schedule: realistic timeline for the season, workmanship coverage that includes water intrusion from installation errors.

Two Short Stories From the Field

A craftsman in Wallingford had cedar lap that looked fine from the street, but the interior corners felt soft under a finger. We pulled a 6-inch section, found the WRB lapped backward at a window head, and decay running down behind the trim. Rather than reskin the whole house, we rebuilt the west wall with a ventilated rainscreen, duplicated the original 4-inch reveal cedar, and replaced only the lower story on the south side where splash-back was worst. Five years later, the paint still looks tight, and the moisture readings are boring in the best way.

In West Seattle, a homeowner hired the cheapest bid for fiber cement. They skipped joint flashing, ran siding tight to the roof shingles at a dormer, and filled the gap with caulk. By winter's end, the caulk had split, and water tracked under the laps. We came in as the Dry rot repair contractor, cut back the siding, installed proper step and kick-out flashing, and redid only the affected dormer faces. The repair cost nearly what the original crew saved the client by cutting the corner.

When to Bring in an Inspector

If you're buying a home or preparing for a major siding investment, a Seattle dry rot inspection by someone who specializes in exteriors is worthwhile. They won't see through walls, but moisture mapping and infrared on a cool morning can pinpoint suspect zones. Combine that with a contractor who is willing to make controlled test cuts, and you'll avoid both over-scoping and dangerous optimism.

Final Thoughts on Balancing Price and Peace of Mind

Hiring siding contractors in Seattle isn't about finding the lowest number. It's about buying a system that drains and breathes in a damp climate, installed by people who have learned painful lessons and won't repeat them on your walls. A quality bid looks longer and costs a bit more because it accounts for reality: rainscreens, flashing, end-grain sealing, and a plan for the week when it rains sideways.

If you keep the focus on water management, supervision, and materials suited to the Pacific Northwest, you'll spend your money once. And if you only need trim and siding repair rather than a full replacement, insist on the same discipline in miniature. Whether it's a tidy seattle trim repair at a belly band or comprehensive siding repair Seattle homes often need after a decade of storms, the right crew proves its value in the details you can't see once the last board is nailed and painted.

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