HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

FASCIA BOARD REPAIR

For do-it-yourself repairs

The board that rests behind your gutter is called a fascia board. It lives with some unique problems. First, since it's always covered by a gutter, it is never exposed to sunlight. Second, it is in an area that is constantly wet or damp. Third, it never gets any paint. (When you last painted your house, did you take your gutters down and paint behind them?) So, it's little wonder that fascia boards rot out as frequently as they do.

PROLONGING THE LIFE OF YOUR FASCIA

There are a couple of things that you can do to help prolong the life of your fascia boards. First, when you have to replace your gutters, check the fascia to make sure it is sound and securely nailed. If so, put two coats of paint on it. (Oil-base paint is best for this job.) After the paint dries, you can install the gutters.

CHECKING THE RAFTER ENDS

If, when you remove the gutters, the fascia is loose, and longer replacement nails don't seem to secure it adequately, then the ends of the roof rafters have probably rotted. If this is the case, the fascia board must be removed completely to replace the rafter ends. When you get the fascia board off, your rafter ends will look much like the diagram below. You'll need to determine which one(s) are rotted.

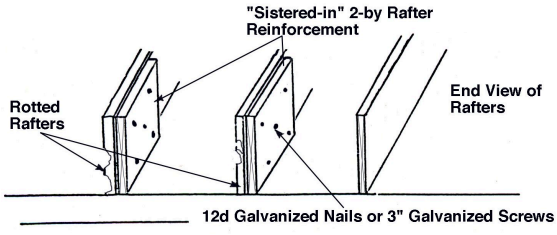
THE NAIL TEST

If you can't tell by looking, take a nail and try to push it into the rafter in several places. If you can push it into the wood by hand more than 1/2", then the rafter end should be reinforced.

REINFORCING ROTTED RAFTER ENDS

Repairing the ends of your rafters is fairly simple:

1. Measure the size of your roof rafters.
2. Cut a new piece of that size wood about three feet long, and nail it alongside the existing rafter, making sure that it is flush with the end *(see illustrations)*.
3. After you have reinforced all the rafters that need it, re-nail the fascia board in place.
4. Mark the location of each new rafter end on the top of the fascia board, so when you re-attach your gutter you'll know where to drive in your nails.

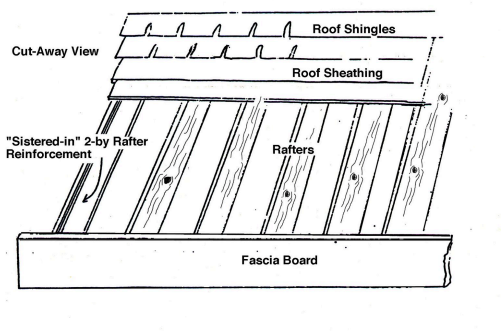


End view of rafters, with "sistered-in" 2-by rafter reinforcement

REPLACING THE FASCIA BOARD

If the fascia board itself has rotted and must be replaced, outdoor treated wood is best to prevent recurrence of this problem in the future. (If you use untreated wood, you can slow down the damage from moisture by painting all surfaces of the fascia board with primer and two coats of exterior paint before installing it.) You can also use a vinyl or aluminum fascia wrap that fits over new or existing fascia boards and protects the wood from the elements.

Measure the fascia board you are replacing to determine what size board you'll need. Nail the new one to the rafter ends, just like your gutters, using #10 galvanized box nails.



Cut-away view of the repair behind the fascia board

Bet you thought rafter repair was much more complicated! Most homeowners don't realize how simple this repair is, and how much it can extend the life of their home.

LEAD-BASED PAINT

If your house was built prior to 1978, the fascia boards may have one or more coats of lead-based paint on them; if so, disturbing these surfaces can produce lead-based paint dust, which is a health hazard that poses a special threat to young children. Make sure you take the proper precautions to minimize lead contamination. (See separate handout on "Controlling Lead-Based Paint during Your Paint Repair Project – Outside Projects.")

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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