

Maintenance and Restoration of Sikkens Cetol 1 and 23 and Sikkens Log and Siding stain By Rich Littlefield

This article is written to help explain our processes of restoration and maintenance of log homes with the Sikkens Cetol and Log and Siding stains installed on them.

First, let me start by saying that Sikkens makes an excellent selection of stains for exterior and interior wood and log surfaces. Their stain is beautiful, is extremely durable, and is the go to choice for many log home owners and painters.

That being said, I've run into a problem very often with Sikkens that I keep having to explain, so I thought I would put it in writing and try to make it a little easier to understand.

Sikkens is a film forming stain, kind of like a transparent paint. Over time, it fails. Failing means that it changes color significantly, or it no longer repels water. At this point, it may give up its hold on the wood and flake off, it may just turn color, or it may still be clinging to the wood, and just not doing its job. Every stain in existence fails; Sikkens is not special or deficient in this regard. I'm not knocking it, just stating a fact.

The problem comes in when people have expectations of maintenance of the Sikkens stain, and it has already gone beyond maintenance where another coat of color or clear will put it back into service, and where another coat will make a bad situation much worse. Sikkens states in their literature that you should expect to get 2-4 years life out of their system on a sunny side of a house, and 3-5 years on a shady side. At this point, maintenance should be performed. Maintenance is cleaning the surface gently with bleach, TSP, and water. After that, another coat of stain or clear coat should be applied to replenish UV absorbers, blockers, resin, and pigment. If the color is ok, the clear should be applied in order not to overly darken the appearance.

The problem is that many people wait 4, 5, or even 6 years before any maintenance is done. The stain moves right on past the maintenance stage, and fails while it's on the wall. What does this mean for you as the homeowner? If new stain is applied over this failed stain, two things will happen. One, the new stain will look horrible; the failed stain leaves resin in the wood that turns black when the new stain is applied over it. Two, the new stain will fail quickly, since it is applied over failed stain.

Sikkens tech support, at 1-866-Sikkens, will bear this out, and will give you the following test to perform to verify failure of the stain. Clean a spot with a 3 to 1 solution of bleach and water to remove all mold and mildew. Rinse and allow the wood to dry thoroughly. Apply a thin coat of Sikkens Cetol 23 to the cleaned area, and observe if the patch turns dark. If it does, the wall must be stripped of all the old stain per Sikkens instructions, either with sanding, media blasting, or chemical stripping and then sanding.

It is very common for me to be called to a Sikkens coated house for maintenance and then find out that one, two, or three of the walls need to be stripped to bring them up to the manufacturers' standard for reapplication of the Sikkens product.

I'm more than willing to do partial strip jobs, using our media blasting system. We can precisely strip only the areas that need it, recoat them, and wash and recoat the rest of the Sikkens that is intact. Thereafter, an annual cleaning will allow us to stay on top of maintenance, applying a clear or stain coat periodically as necessary. You may still have to strip highly exposed walls every 10 years or so, but you should get much longer life out of the Sikkens if it is applied correctly to blasted bare walls, washed annually, and maintained properly.

If you want something that is easier to maintain, or a lighter color shade, we can also blast the entire house and switch you to a water based system that works well for us, too.

I hope this article has cleared up some of the misconceptions about the Sikkens product, and encourage you to visit their website at www.nam.sikkens.com to verify everything I have said. Better yet, call them and talk to their great Customer Support at 866-Sikkens.