

Choosing the best siding option for your home



TIM,

We recently encountered a competitor to Hardie Plank called LP SmartSiding. Would you help us understand how LP SmartSiding compares to Hardie Plank?

The most common installation for both products is lap siding installed as individual planks. When compared to vinyl siding, these products will have a traditional wide plank look with sleek straight lines we've come to expect with traditional wood siding without wood siding maintenance.

JAMES HARDIE FIBER CEMENT SIDING

For the past decade, the composite siding standard-bearer has been the James Hardie company. James Hardie products, commonly referred to as “Hardie” or “HardiePlank” are also often referred to as “fiber-cement” products because of the materials that they are made from. The main/bulk ingredient in James Hardie siding products is silica dust. The silica dust is combined with other materials such as wood fiber for strength as well as several other proprietary ingredients that are a closely guarded trade secret. One of the final ingredients is cement which is the binding agent that holds everything together. The resultant product is a very hard, durable, and attractive exterior siding product.

LP SMARTSIDING

LP (Louisiana Pacific) SmartSide is a relative newcomer to the marketplace, with production beginning in 1997.

I should note that while LP’s current product bears no resemblance to their first attempt in the composite siding marketplace, their first product, Inner Seal, had major problems and was plagued with rot and swelling among other issues, which resulted in LP settling a class-action lawsuit to resolve homeowners’ claims.

LP vowed never to repeat their first experience and their engineers formulated a new product, LP SmartSide, which addressed all of the shortcomings of their first composite siding product. SmartSide is made out of what LP calls an “engineered wood” product. After mixing/coating, wood strands are laid down in interwoven orientations to give the product dimensional stability, a loosely interwoven mat of wood strands is then fed into a press which does a few things simultaneously: it embosses a wood-like finish into the surface of the boards, it compresses the interwoven-mat into the final thickness of the desired siding product, and it uses heat to activate the binding agent of the material.

Now that we have briefly described the LP and Hardie products, let’s examine some of their primary differences.

How long are James Hardie and LP SmartSide boards?

LP SMARTSIDE
16-foot board lengths
JAMES HARDIE
12-foot board lengths

This is one area where LP SmartSide

excels. The boards are made in 16-foot lengths as opposed to James Hardie’s 12-foot board lengths. The end result is 33% fewer seams on your home when the product is installed. Fewer seams adds durability as well as beauty.

DURABILITY

Over the past 20 years, SmartSide has been performing well across the US, therefore it is continuing to grow in popularity as a good quality siding option. James Hardie products on the other hand have experienced a long and successful 127-year history.

Which company offers a better warranty?

LP SMARTSIDE
50-Year Limited Warranty
JAMES HARDIE
30-Year Limited Warranty

Both products offer long warranty periods, but LP offers a unique 5/50 warranty. If the product fails within the first five years, both labor and materials are covered. After five years, the warranty is prorated. The James Hardie warranty covers only materials but is not prorated after the first five years.

EASE OF INSTALLATION

Since Hardie is heavier than LP, it’s more difficult and time-consuming to install. Moreover, many contractors could do without Hardie plank’s tendency to break during installation. This brittle nature increases material costs due to waste and prolongs installation time.

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LP Smart Siding is a bit more flexible and this flexibility results in less breakage during installation. Also, it is easier to cut than Hardie and does not require any special tools. Additionally, because LP boards are longer and lighter than Hardie, they are also quicker and easier to install. For all these reasons, many contractors switch from Hardie to LP.

FAILURES

Proper installation is the Achilles heel for both products. If Hardie Plank and LP Smartsiding are properly installed, both are good products that will stand the test of time. As you might suspect, if improperly installed, both products will fail, and unfortunately, these failures will not be covered by the manufacturer's warranty

CONCLUSION

As with most products in the building industry, hiring trained professionals is the key to enjoyment and longevity. With a trained and knowledgeable builder by your side, both products can offer sleek beauty, and low maintenance curb appeal for many decades to come.



Tim Graham has been building homes in South Central, KY for over 30 years.

He is a Master Builder, a Registered Builder and a Certified Green Professional.

Tim Graham, President,
Design Builders, Inc.
www.designbuildersonline.com