



# 5 GARAGE DOOR CASING ROT REPAIR POINTS

Every Homeowner Should Know



A practical guide to finding rot, removing the damage, stopping the moisture, choosing better replacement materials, and sealing the repair so it lasts.

**By Ron King - The Ultimate DIYer**

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# BEFORE YOU START

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Garage casing rot often starts at the bottom corners where rain, splashback, concrete contact, failed caulk, or damaged paint lets moisture enter the wood. The visible damage may be only the beginning, so the goal is not just to make the trim look better - it is to remove the failed material and correct the reason it got wet.

**SAFETY:** Garage door springs, cables, tracks, and opener components can be under significant tension. This guide is about casing and trim repair. If the repair requires disturbing the spring system, cables, structural header, or track mounting points, stop and use a qualified garage door or structural professional.

## Useful tools

- Utility knife and paint scraper
- Flat pry bar and hammer
- Oscillating multi-tool, circular saw, or reciprocating saw as needed
- Drill/driver and exterior-rated screws or trim fasteners
- Tape measure, square, level, and pencil
- Caulk gun, sanding block or sander, putty knife
- Small screwdriver or awl for probing suspicious wood
- Eye protection, gloves, hearing protection, and dust protection

## Typical materials

- Replacement casing/trim: PVC, properly dried treated lumber, or another exterior-rated trim material
- Stainless or exterior-coated fasteners
- Exterior primer and quality exterior acrylic/latex paint
- Paintable exterior caulk/sealant and exterior wood filler where appropriate
- Replacement garage door weatherstripping if the old seal is damaged or removed
- Flashing or water-management materials if the original detail is allowing repeated wetting

**THE BIG IDEA:** Do not treat rot as a paint problem. Rot is a moisture problem first and a carpentry/finish problem second.

# 1 IDENTIFYING ROT EARLY

*Catching the problem early can turn a major rebuild into a manageable trim repair.*



*Rot often starts low on the casing where water can sit against wood and masonry.*

Soft wood, peeling paint, swelling, crumbling fibers, insect damage, warping, and bowing are all warning signs. Pay extra attention to the bottom 6-12 inches of the casing, lower corners, joints, nail holes, and any place where trim touches concrete or masonry.

- Press suspicious areas with a small screwdriver or awl. Sound wood should resist light pressure; decayed wood may feel spongy, crush, or flake apart.
- Look for paint that repeatedly bubbles or peels in the same location. Repeated paint failure can be a moisture clue, not simply poor paint.
- Check both sides of the opening. One damaged corner may mean the opposite side is beginning to fail too.
- Look behind weatherstripping when possible. Trim can be badly deteriorated even when the exposed face still looks acceptable.
- Watch for insect galleries or holes. Insects are not always the original cause; damp, softened wood can make the area more attractive to pests.

**DO NOT STOP AT THE SURFACE:** If the casing is soft, remove enough material to determine whether the jamb, sheathing, framing, or nearby fastener points are also affected.

## 2

## CUTTING OUT THE DAMAGE

*A long-lasting repair starts by removing all failed material rather than covering it.*



*Remove deteriorated casing carefully so the brick, drywall, door components, and surrounding finishes stay intact.*

Always remove rotted wood until you reach solid, dry material. Patching over soft or crumbling wood may look acceptable for a short time, but it leaves the decay and moisture pathway in place.

- Score paint and caulk lines with a utility knife before prying. This helps prevent tearing paint or drywall paper beyond the repair area.
- Remove weatherstripping that blocks access. If it is brittle, torn, flattened, or damaged during removal, replace it rather than trying to reuse it.
- Use a wide pry bar and work gradually. When prying near brick or finished drywall, use a wood block to spread the load and reduce the chance of chipping or crushing the surface.
- If the casing is extensively damaged, replacing the full length often produces a cleaner, more uniform result than splicing a short patch into the bottom.
- After the casing is removed, inspect the jamb, framing, sheathing, sill area, and fastener locations before installing anything new.

**ESCALATE WHEN NEEDED:** If rot reaches structural framing, the header, garage door track mounting areas, or large sections of the jamb, the repair may be beyond a simple casing replacement.

## 3

## MOISTURE CONTROL

*Fix the water source before you close the wall or install new trim.*



*The repair lasts only if water is directed away from the new casing.*

Wood rot is driven by sustained moisture. New trim installed into the same wet condition can fail again, even if it is carefully painted. Before rebuilding, determine how water is reaching the area and how it will drain or dry in the future.

- Keep wood from sitting directly on concrete where it can wick moisture. Provide a small clearance or use a rot-resistant detail at the bottom.
- Check gutters and roof drainage above the garage opening. Overflowing gutters or concentrated runoff can soak the casing during every storm.
- Look for sprinkler spray, driveway splashback, leaking downspouts, and landscape irrigation that repeatedly wets the lower trim.
- Inspect caulk joints, flashing, trim caps, brick-to-trim transitions, and other seams that may allow water behind the casing.
- Allow wet framing or masonry to dry before sealing the area back up. Trapping moisture behind new trim can create another hidden problem.

**SIMPLE TEST:** After a rain, inspect the opening while it is still wet. Water trails and damp spots often reveal the source more clearly than an inspection on a dry day.

## 4

## PROPER MATERIAL REPLACEMENT

*Choose materials and fasteners that are suited for an exterior opening.*



*A durable repair uses exterior-rated trim and corrosion-resistant fasteners.*

The original guide recommends treated lumber or PVC trim where appropriate, and that remains a strong approach. The best choice depends on the existing construction, appearance, exposure, and how the trim will be fastened and finished.

- PVC trim will not rot, which makes it useful at moisture-prone lower corners. Follow the manufacturer's fastening, expansion, and painting instructions.
- Treated lumber can be a good choice, but freshly treated material may contain too much moisture for immediate painting. Let it dry until it is paint-ready; two weeks may be enough in warm, dry conditions, but weather and lumber moisture vary.
- Match the original thickness and profile so weatherstripping, reveals, and door clearances remain correct.
- Use stainless-steel or quality exterior-coated fasteners. Ordinary steel fasteners can rust and bleed through paint.
- Prime or seal vulnerable cut ends and end grain. End grain can absorb water rapidly if it is left exposed.
- Reinstall or replace weatherstripping so it seals against the garage door without forcing the door out of alignment.

**FIT BEFORE FASTENING:** Dry-fit each piece first. Confirm length, reveal, bottom clearance, weatherstrip position, and door operation before permanently fastening the new casing.

## 5

## SEALING &amp; PAINTING

*The finish system is the final moisture barrier - but it cannot replace good water management.*



*Painter's tape made for rough surfaces can help keep finish lines clean against brick or masonry.*

Once the new material is fitted and dry enough to finish, seal the vulnerable cuts and joints, fill fastener holes, smooth the surface, prime properly, and apply a quality exterior topcoat.

- Prime all exposed cuts, end grain, and bare wood. When practical, priming hidden faces and cut ends before installation adds protection.
- Fill nail or screw holes with an exterior-rated filler, let it cure, and sand smooth before final paint.
- Use a quality paintable exterior caulk at trim joints and transitions. Do not caulk over intentional drainage paths or weep locations.
- Use a compatible exterior primer, followed by a quality exterior acrylic or latex enamel/topcoat. Follow the paint manufacturer's recoat times and temperature limits.
- If using treated lumber, confirm that it is dry enough for the primer/paint system. The older guide used about two weeks as a rule of thumb, but actual drying time depends on weather and moisture content.
- Use painter's tape on brick or masonry for cleaner lines. Press the tape firmly into the surface texture and remove it before the coating becomes too hard.

**MAINTENANCE:** Inspect the repaired area at least once a year and after severe weather. Touch up failed caulk or chipped paint before water has time to soak into the material.

# FINAL REPAIR CHECKLIST

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- ☐ The water source was identified and corrected
- ☐ All soft, crumbling, or visibly decayed material was removed
- ☐ Jamb, framing, sheathing, and fastener areas were inspected
- ☐ Replacement material is exterior-rated and fits the opening correctly
- ☐ Wood is kept from unnecessary contact with concrete or standing water
- ☐ Exterior-rated stainless or coated fasteners were used
- ☐ Weatherstripping was replaced or reinstalled correctly
- ☐ Cut ends/end grain were primed or sealed
- ☐ Holes and joints were filled, sanded, and caulked where appropriate
- ☐ Primer and exterior paint were applied according to product instructions
- ☐ The garage door opens, closes, and seals normally after the repair

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Wood rot is caused by fungi that thrive when wood stays damp for long periods.
- Paint alone does not stop rot if water is still getting behind the trim.
- End grain generally absorbs water faster than the broad face of a board.
- Many repeat rot repairs fail because the original water source was never corrected.
- PVC trim does not rot, but correct fastening, joint spacing, sealing, and paint compatibility still matter.

**BEST LONG-TERM HABIT:** Walk around the garage opening every spring and fall. A five-minute inspection of paint, caulk, weatherstripping, and drainage can catch small failures before they become another carpentry repair.

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