

Poor fitting doors create lock problems

Category: "Information"

By Frank Fourchalk, Security Expert, Syndicated Columnist

I think everybody at some time has experienced door problems. Unfortunately these problems quite often affect not only the opening and closing but the locking of the door as well.

Humidity, poor door or hardware installation, or just plain wear and tear are major contributing problems. Before you can apply a remedy, you must first recognize the problem.

There are many contributing deficiencies to look for when evaluating door problems, however four main ones come to mind.

Binding on the outside top edge is one of the most common problems recognized by a sticky door which is rubbing along the latch side near the top. If you stand on a ladder and look at the top of the door, chances are you will see wear in the problem area.

The first thing you should check for are loose screws in the hinges, particularly the top hinge plate. You can short term remedy this problem by simply tightening the screws; however a more permanent fix involves removing the screws from the hinges and replacing them with No. 8, 3" screws assuring they penetrate the stud closest to the stop.

The second problem could involve a door binding along the entire length of the latch-side. If you have ruled out hinge problems, you may be experiencing a swollen door caused by humidity. If your door edges were not painted or varnished, water could be entering and causing the wood to swell.

If you're not sure a swollen door is the problem, a sure way to find out is to wait until a warm day and see if your door reverts back to a perfect fit. If it does you can be assured that water is your problem. The warm weather dries out the wood and causes it to shrink. An easy solution to this problem once the door is dry and fitting good, is to seal it with a good primer paint or stain-varnish combination.

If you find that the door when dry is still rubbing, you will have to remove the door and plane or sand down the latch side until it closes freely again. Remember after sanding or planing, you must seal the unpainted edges before re-hanging the door.

If your door rubs along the bottom on the latch-side, this could be due to fastener failure. If you notice that the lower jamb has loosed or is not seated properly, it may have shifted or pulled loose from its nails. If you have to reposition or reset the jam, make sure to use casing nails. Don't forget to allow a 1/8 " gap between the closed door and the bottom jamb to allow a barrier free close.

And last but possibly one of the most common problems is the door that doesn't latch properly. After ruling out loose hinges, the mis-aligned latch plate or strike plate may need to be filed larger or re-located to assure a perfect secured close.