

## Removal of Fixed Wooden Storm Windows

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Wooden storms are added to protect the windows in back from the ravages of Newfoundland and Labrador winters. They also add a second layer of glass for insulation against the cold. Wooden storms are either fixed or operable, however “operable” storms are frequently inoperable in that have been sealed against the weather.

If fixed wooden storms need to be removed for either maintenance or replacement, it must be assumed that they have been well sealed against the weather. Storms are usually attached to the exterior trim using screws or bolts (I have even seen them nailed to the trim) and over decades they have been filled with paint or rusted or stripped so they cannot be removed. Also, the sealing of the storms can be an issue when removing them. Overzealous workmen have been known to use construction adhesive to seal – glue – them to the trim. The removal of fixed wooden storms can be a walk in the park or a titanic struggle. Here are some ideas that can make that work easier.



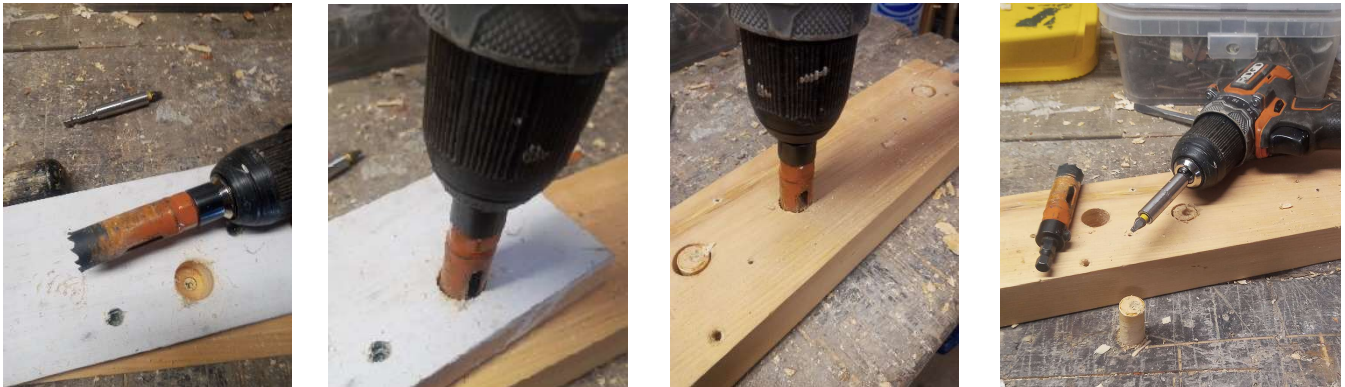
*This window on a job in Bareneed gave me fits; eventually it took me about two hours to remove these three storms. The brass screws were filled with paint and several heads broke off when I tried to remove them. The storms were tightly fit inside the trim so I had to remove the pilasters between before I could attack the construction adhesive, which glued them to the trim. I had to use steam to loosen the seal before I could remove the storms with a pry bar. Fortunately, the storms were planned for replacement as they were damaged by their removal.*

*This rather new storm is attached with a screw and finished washer. The screw head is stripped and, in a decade or so, the head will be completely filled with paint as will the washer. It will take a bit of time to clear the paint and for you to discover it had been stripped!*



Before the seal between the storm and the trim can be broken, the fasteners should be removed. If the screw heads are filled with paint, I have found that the use of steam is helpful in removing the paint so a bit can get a purchase on the fastener. I use dental tools to clean out the paint softened by the steam, but some other thin sharp tool can also be used.

If the heads of the screws are stripped or the fastener broken, I saw a method the other day to detach the storm from the trim.



Use a jig with a hole to center a hole saw, the smallest you can find, to surround the offending fastener. Screw the jig over the screw and use the hole saw (without the pilot bit) to drill part way into the storm enough to align the hole saw. Remove the jig and continue the drilling with the hole saw to the thickness of the storm window, which you have marked on the saw with tape. Repeat with all the fasteners still holding the storm to the trim and all that will be left is the paint and caulk. You can later fill the holes in the storm with dowels.

To break the paint and caulk bond I start with a utility knife or, even better, a paint saw to cut the paint line. Then, you can drive a stiff putty knife into the crack then widen it with a series wooden wedges. You can use a pry bar, but it is harder to control than a driven wedge and can damage the trim if it is not protected. Slowly work your way around the storm until you can remove it.



*A hint: if you are working on a ladder, tie the wooden wedges to your belt with twine as they can easily fall out and you will spend your day retrieving wedges from the ground.*

Once the storms have been removed, the window sash are now exposed to the weather and almost always that is not a problem and no boarding is necessary. In churches, however, it will be necessary to install boards over the windows to protect the stained glass for the weather. You can use the removed storm as a template to make a board of plywood or 1x6 spruce boards and screw it to the trim.