

The homeowner's guide to roofing

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Raising the Roof

The roof of a home can be thought of as its crowning glory—pun intended. This is because roofing covers approximately 40 percent of a home's exterior, and along with other vital, functional parts, including shingles, underlayment, gutters and vents, it plays a significant role in not only protecting the home against the elements, but also contributes heavily to its aesthetic value. And more often than not, an enhancement in visual appeal, translates to an increase in the value of a home.

Because of its importance in maintaining the structural integrity of a home, damages to a roof and its accompanying operational components, can have grave consequences. For this and other reasons (including visual appeal), it is extremely important for homeowners to make an informed and worthy investment when selecting new or replacement roofing.

Such an investment will yield great returns in terms of safety, protection and resale value.

Before



After



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ROTTING ROOF?

But, how exactly does one determine when it is time to invest in new or replacement roofing?

Arguably, unlike with other home renovation projects, the process of assessing whether or not new or replacement roofing is needed can be quite daunting, because it is sometimes difficult to recognize that a problem with a home's roofing exists until the damage has inevitably been done. For this reason, it pays for homeowners to pay close attention to roofing just like they would other parts of their homes—especially in older homes—to address even small issues as they arise.

Doing so in a timely fashion will prevent larger and more costly issues from occurring in the long run and will preserve the quality and value of the home.

Fortunately, there are some warning signs and notable indications (beyond the obvious leak) that can prove helpful in this evaluation process.

The following are especially relevant:

Age: By most estimates, a roof has an average lifespan of about 20 years. This approximation is dependent on a number of factors, such as the type of roofing materials, the environment, weather, installation method, etc. Nonetheless, over time, particularly for a roof that is more than 20 years old, thorough and consistent inspection and maintenance is advised to prevent damages, both small—leaks and large—collapses.

Missing, curling and cracked shingles:

Shingles are the flat or curved overlapping tiles found on a roof. They are made from materials such as asphalt, clay or ceramic, that can vary in cost, weight, durability, color, and architectural style.

Missing, curling and cracked shingles are a tell-tale sign of a roof in need of repairs. In the case of missing shingles, this may be a sign of a larger underlying issue. One or two missing shingles may result from strong weather conditions, such as a wind storm, and can easily be replaced; however, if the problem is consistent across the roof, this is indicative of a more serious issue. Moreover, roofs today are built to resist such weather

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impacts, and when tabs peel up or rip off, it's a possible sign of failure for the tar sealant that sits underneath the shingles causing them to be more mobile. As a result, in the presence of heavy winds and rain, shingles can be lifted and blown away, and in the case of the latter, water can seep into the home.

Curling and cracked shingles also present some problems, as they are signs of an aging roof. When shingles (particularly those made with asphalt) get older and dry out, they begin to curl. Ventilation in the attic can be used to slow the process, but keeping an eye out for this issue can allow the homeowner to make necessary repairs.

Stains and streaks: The appearance of black or greenish streaks or stains on a roof is problematic because it usually indicates the presence of moisture-loving mold or mildew. These agents may cause some damage on their own, but they're considered most serious because they show that moisture is present. Along with causing leaks, moisture causes shingles to swell, blister and eventually crack open. Furthermore, it can lead to rotting and the eventual deterioration of a roof.

Following a storm, roofs generally dry out on their own within 24 and 48 hours; any longer beyond that time span may generate a mold and algae problem. Often times, algae-proof materials are used to limit the likelihood of developing moisture-related damages; however, careful attention must be given to prevent or minimize this issue.

...And more: Aside from the warning signals highlighted above, other signs that a roof may be in need of repair or replacement, include the presence of termite damage, gutter issues or ice dams, damages to flashing (around chimneys and pipes), valleys (where two sides of a roof meet) walls or siding.

If any of these issues are found, there may not be a need to replace the entire roof—which, as can be imagined, is much more expensive than doing repairs. This last option is especially likely if the roof is relatively new and was installed properly.

Ultimately, the decision is best determined by an experienced contractor.

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THE STYLE OF YOUR ROOF

When it comes time to choose which type of roofing shingle would look best on your home, there are plenty of options to choose from. Understanding the differences between each style and how they would look on your home, can help you add the curb appeal you've always wanted. No matter what type of roof style you have, an experienced roofing contractor can easily handle the job. To familiarize you with the different roofing styles, here are some of the most popular in the tristate area.

Gable roofs: Are one of the most common roof styles. They have two sloping sides that come together at a ridge, creating end walls with a triangular extension, called a gable, at the top. This design allows water and snow to naturally slide off, reducing the need for any complex maintenance during the winter. Gable roofs are considered one of the simpler and more affordable options, but are not advised for hurricane-prone regions due to their ability to create lift and peeling of materials in the presence of strong winds.

Hipped roofs: Are roofs with sides that

slope down toward the wall. Like gable roofs, this style is also quite common and performs well during the winter by allowing water and snow to easily slide off. However, unlike gable roofs, hipped roofs perform better in the face of extreme winds. The drawback of this style is that it causes the inside of the home to have less space, making access to the attic more difficult. It can also require more complicated maintenance and can be more expensive than gable roofs.

Mansard and gambrel roofs: These two roofs are very similar in that they have a slight slope at the top and a steeper portion below, creating a flat area at the top of the house. A mansard roof, also known as a French roof, is a four-sided roof with a double slope on each side that meet forming a low-pitched roof, while a gambrel, or barn roof, has just two sides. Because of their flat tops, these styles need extra reinforcements for regions that experience snow or strong winds. However, they are considered an aesthetically pleasing choice due to their shapes, and also allow for more attic space—perfect for those looking for extra living space or the flexibility to make future home additions.

Understanding the differences between each style and how they would look on your home, can help you add the curb appeal you've always wanted.



With the help of a contractor experienced in exterior design, homeowners are able to select the appropriate roofing shingle style that will not only meet their aesthetic preferences, but that will secure their protection from the elements.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

An experienced contractor will also be able to give the homeowner needed advice on additional factors that should be considered when it comes to all things roofing-related. In addition to the region's climate, the home's current roof framing, the direction the house faces, placement of shingles, the roof's longevity, budgetary and time concerns, the following considerations are key:

Using architectural shingles: The use of 2-ply architectural shingles is recommended over 3-tab shingles. While the latter has been widely used over the years, its availability as a single sheet that needs to be cut down prior to installation, may create problems for the homeowner down the road. This is because water is easily able to get between the sheets

causing structural damages over time. On the other hand, two-ply architectural shingles are laminated and offer better protection from rain, water and wind.

Choosing a certified installer:

Manufacturers such as Owens Corning and GAF not only have great style options, but also have the added benefit of providing homeowners with certain warranties. These manufacturers certify installers that they approve of to assure homeowners that installations will be done to optimal standards.

Installing ventilation: Because water damage from cracked, curled or missing shingles is a common cause of roofing problems, the installation of a ventilation system is advised for homeowners seeking to enhance the durability of their roofs. Often, the cause of shingle damage is due to overheating, which can speed up the aging process. A ventilation system will increase air movement and keep the attic cooler, while cooling the shingles from below and preventing them from drying out.

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Overall, proper ventilation, along with attic insulation will help to maintain a comfortable temperature inside the home, increase energy efficiency, prevent moisture damage and contribute to the longevity of the roof.

Having the proper underlayments:

Underlayments serve as a protective layer between the roof and the home. The right underlayment, such as the rain and ice shield, which is a rubber membrane that goes under shingles and prevents ice or water build-up from entering the home, will prevent extreme weather, ice or other elements from damaging a roof.

Roofing maintenance: Maintaining the roof is an important aspect of preserving its integrity. Various roofing types call for different maintenance needs that can range from keeping drains and gutters clean, to more extensive work. Whatever the requirements, replacing damaged shingles and keeping moss or algae off of the roof are always surefire ways to ensure longevity.

Roofing maintenance is often ignored, but it is important to remember that even small problems with a roof can lead to costly home repairs.

With the help of a qualified and experienced contractor, selecting, installing and maintaining a roof is made easier. A durable and stylish roof that is not only able to withstand the elements, but yield great returns for the homeowner is obtainable with expert guidance.

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