

Roof Basics

For the Homeowner



Roof Safety Precautions

An all too common injury for men over the age of 45 is falling off a ladder. Thus, it is very important to be cautious and know your ladder when ascending or descending from roof surfaces. If you are not comfortable on a roof, you can always use binoculars. With that said, no matter how comfortable you are, it is never recommended to walk on a roof greater than 6/12 (6 feet rise for each 12 feet of lateral travel; that's 45 degrees).

Also, don't forget to check for overhead electrical lines when carrying your ladder to the access point and again when walking on the roof. Check the roof sheathing from the attic for deterioration BEFORE walking on the roof. And do not walk on tile, slate, or wet and/or mossy wood shingles/shake roofs.

This is a roofing maintenance checklist homeowners can use to assess the health of their roof. As for repairs, it is always recommended that a licensed, professional roofer is used. You may find a problem using the methods below, but it is essential that repairs are performed correctly and thoroughly by a licensed professional; otherwise, the problem could continue to exist—or even get worse. Here are some things to consider when examining your roof:

- Look at the edge of the shingles at the fascia or gutter area. Do you see multiple layers? Two layers is the maximum desired. Do you know the age of this roof covering? Most asphalt shingles are designed to last about 20 years.
- Debris in valleys and gutters should be removed as it blocks water runoff, which may backup under shingles and penetrate the home. Gutters and downspouts should be free flowing and unrestricted.
- Do you see signs of damage from wind, hail, or mechanical impact? Shingles may be torn, missing, worn from tree branches, have holes or punctures, or may be cupping and curling at the edges. Ice damming commonly occurs when melting snow refreezes at the roof's overhang and will cause shingles to deteriorate prematurely. If in doubt about any observed deficiencies, contact your insurance company and schedule an adjuster to conduct an inspection free of charge.
- Check for worn or damaged flashing around projections through the roof such as vent pipes or hoods, skylights, radon vents, and chimneys. You might also look for metal flashing in the valleys, inspecting for rust.
- Protruding nails (called nail pops) or nails not flush with underlying shingles need to be reset or replaced.
- Look at the top of the chimney, called the splay or cap. Is it cracked or otherwise allowing water to penetrate the chimney interior?
- Are there signs of ponding created where low sloped roofs have started to sag? Do you see cracking, blistering, or alligating of the roofing material of low sloped roofs?
- Are there signs of previous repairs? Note the location and condition of those repairs.
- Take a moment to look at your roof venting. Make sure it is not blocked or clogged. Birds, squirrels, and raccoons commonly will nest in vents and roof overhangs.
- Look for moss, mold or brown spots on roofing material. Also check for low hanging limbs or tree branches resting on the roof.