

# Does Your Roof Really Need to be Replaced?

As soon as people find out I own a roofing company, whether I'm at church or a football game, they ask me how much a new roof costs. Once I learn a few overall elements about the size, pitch and the general type of roofing materials they expect, I can give them a pretty good range. Then I ask one question that typically leaves them baffled: Can your roof be repaired instead?

Most homeowners don't realize that in many cases, repairing a roof is a workable and practical solution to a complete tear off and replacement. As long as the roof is primarily sound, a reliable repair may be all you need to keep your home dry and safe from the outside elements. And, best of all, a good repair can last a nice period of time.

Can you repair a leaky roof? If you're using buckets to catch rain water, the response is probably "no," but if you've just discovered the problem through regular maintenance, it's likely it can be repaired. The key is to regularly maintain your roof. As with any maintenance project, waiting too long could mean the difference between a small repair and a complete replacement.

So how do you maintain your roof so you can catch small glitches before they become big problems? The answer is periodic inspections. I tell my friends to thoroughly inspect the condition of their home's roof once a year and immediately after a severe thunder, hail or ice storm. High wind can rip off shingles, causing a lot of problems. But don't worry, inspecting your roof really isn't all that difficult.

## **Here's what to do:**

First of all, keep your gutters clean and free from debris. If your yard has a lot of trees that hang over your house, it's a good idea to keep those limbs trimmed and away from the house. When leaves fall and collect on asphalt shingles, the moisture can break down the shingles. Tree debris can also collect in the valleys and prevent rainwater from flowing into the gutters.

Take a walk around your house and carefully inspect the overall condition of the roof. You need to ask yourself, does it look sound? Does anything appear different from the last time? When you're inspecting the roof, check for any missing, damaged or curling shingles. And make sure none have come loose. I often recommend using a pair of binoculars to get a good look.

If you can and it's safe to do so, get on your roof. It's the best way to get a good look at your roof. Like before, check the overall condition of the roof, noting anything that looks different from the last time you were up there. Look for any missing, damaged or curling shingles and closely examine the roof ridge and valleys.

Step over to the chimney and examine the flashing, which is the metal sheeting, for any tears, rust or excessive wear. While you're there, thoroughly examine the structure of the chimney and look for any cracks or unusual settling. Now inspect the vents and any other structures, such as skylights for anything amiss.

Lastly, take a good look at the roof line. Is it level? Is the pitch straight? You're looking for sags or dips that indicate damage to the decking below.

Now let's take the inspection indoors. Go into every single room in the house and carefully examine the ceiling and walls for dark spots or peeling paint. Either of these things could indicate signs of moisture. Don't forget to check around the chimney for excess moisture or water damage.

Next, move into the attic and inspect the chimney at the ceiling and floor. Don't move the insulation, but as much as you can, inspect the ceiling, looking for dark spots and water damage.

### **You found damage - now what**

If you find roof damage, first thing you want to do is check your homeowner's insurance policy. My company has former insurance inspectors on its crew, and we know from experience that many insurance companies pay for roof replacement. At the end of the day, it's cheaper for them to pay for a new roof because it protects the more expensive contents inside the home. Most roofing companies work with insurance adjusters all the time. Give them a call and they can most likely advise you whether or not a replacement could be covered by your insurance.

If it's a small problem, you may be able to repair it yourself. Typically, flashing issues are relatively minor. If your home's roof is less than 15 years old, call a reliable roofing company. They can repair the damage, saving you thousands of dollars and you'll still have a good quality roof protecting your home.

If you find your home has a few damaged or loose shingles, it's possible to remove and replace those yourself. That too is a relatively minor project.

Another question homeowners ask me is about adding another layer of shingles over the old one. If you have just one layer, you can add another as long as the decking underneath is in good condition. Before you add the second layer, you need to know your roof will not last as long as a complete tear off. The first layer retains heat, which dries out the new layer faster, causing them to decay. While the surface of the shingles appears dry, the boards underneath remain soaked and saturated.

If you feel overwhelmed by roof repair or replacement questions, call a roofing professional – that's why we're here. Many, including my company, will be happy to provide a free inspection and estimate. And we'll sit down and answer all the questions you have about roofing systems.