



Commercial Roofing Maintenance and Repair

Roof damage for both commercial and residential buildings is a major source of property loss each year. The roof is the building envelope's first line of defense from natural hazards, such as wind, rain, fire, hail, ice, snow and extreme heat. The risks posed by these hazards vary from region to the region throughout the United States.

Installing or a replacing a roof is a major investment. Business or building owners should work with experienced and licensed inspectors and contractors to make sure regional natural hazards and appropriate mitigation measures are considered before, during and after the installation, replacement or repair process.

Performing regular roof maintenance will prolong the life of the roof, while also protecting it against damage due to natural disasters. Some maintenance may even be covered by warranties. Without regular inspections, the first indication of a roofing problem may not be visible until it has resulted in interior damage. This typically results in more costly repairs to the roof and the interior.

Recognizing signs of a roof problem

- **On asphalt shingle or low-slope roofs with a granulated cap sheet**, a significant number of roof granules washing away is an indication of the increasingly rapid deterioration of the roof cover.
- **Water stains** on the ceiling inside the building are a sign of a leak, which can be caused by a crack or hole in the roof. Even the smallest leak can be a sign of big trouble.
- **Curling shingles** are a sign that the shingles are aging and are potentially not providing adequate protection of the roof deck. Loose, cracked, broken or missing roof tiles can create openings for water to find its way inside the building. On metal roofs, rust or loss of protective coating is a sign of aging materials.
- **If the building has unexplained mold or odors inside**, it may indicate a roof leak.
- **Many factors** contribute to roof decay:
 - **Ultraviolet light** from the sun and temperature extremes in your area.
 - **Exposure** to wind, snow, ice, rain and foot traffic on the roof.
 - **Dark-colored roofs** absorb more sunlight and become hotter, which typically reduces their service life. This is a significant issue in southern climates.

Consult a roofing professional to assist in determining the health and remaining life of the roof and to discuss options about potential roof problems.

Care and Maintenance

Roof care and preventive maintenance should be on every business or building owners' "To Do" list. This is an effective way to stop roof problems before they start and fix existing problems before it's too late. Proper maintenance also prolongs the life of the roof.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

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- **Ensuring proper ventilation of attic spaces is a code requirement, unless the space is specifically designed as a sealed attic.** This may also help extend roof life by reducing the buildup of heat and moisture in attic spaces, which can increase the deterioration rate of roofing materials and the roof structure.
- **Keep trees trimmed.** This prevents branches from rubbing against the roof or from providing excessive shade that can promote moisture retention.
- **Keeping roof, valleys, gutters and downspouts clear** of leaves, twigs and other litter will promote proper drainage.
- **Preservatives** available for some roof types may help limit the effects of weathering associated with moisture and help to retard growth of molds and mosses.
- **Regularly check for accumulated debris on the roof.** Keeping the roof clear of debris reduces the risk that embers from a wildfire will ignite the roof. A clean roof also eliminates leaves and other materials that have a tendency to hold moisture which can speed up the deterioration of the roofing materials.
- **Edge shingles should be well-fastened** and should not extend more than ¼ inch beyond the drip edge in high wind areas, to prevent the shingles from lifting up and peeling when the winds blow.
- **Check the stability of shingles** by gently lifting up on the edge of the shingle tabs. If the tabs are still flexible but not well anchored, roofing cement can be applied. Using a caulking gun, place three dabs of asphalt cement about the size of a silver dollar underneath each tab. Press the tab firmly into the adhesive.
- **Inspect rooftop vents and equipment to make sure they are well sealed.** Seal any gaps with flashing cement. Hire a professional if the metal flashing is badly deteriorated or if vents can wiggle back and forth.
- **When inspecting roof decking of metal roofs for water stains,** it is important to pay particular attention above the chimney, around vents and along valleys or roof slope changes.
- **On metal roofs** it is important not to let metals of different types touch each other because this can lead to corrosion.
- **From inside the attic, regularly checking for sunlight penetrating the decking can detect leaks.** Pay close attention around vent pipes and chimneys or other roof penetrations. If there is some light, check for signs of leaks.
- **Inspect the roof in the fall and spring** for cracked or curling shingles or damaged roofing materials. Repair or replace.
- **After a hail event** with hail stones larger than ¾ inch, contact your insurer and have the roof inspected.

Consulting a professional roofing inspector may be helpful if concerns exist after a maintenance review of the roof. The inspector can also help to determine the health of the roof, estimate the remaining life of the roof, explore options for dealing with potential roof problems, and offer additional steps to protect the roof.

When hiring a roofing inspector:

- **Look** for an established, licensed or bonded professional.
- **Ask** for references and follow up with them.
- **Ask** to see certificates of insurance. Make sure that coverage for liability and workers compensation insurance is current.
- **Contact** your local Better Business Bureau to check for complaints filed against the inspector.

In today's economy, prolonging the life of a roof is a prudent business decision. Remember that a little maintenance can result in a lot of savings – especially when compared to the cost of replacing the roof.

