

Replacing Your Roof

An expense that homeowners must occasionally face is putting a new roof or roof coating on their house. The Better Business Bureau suggests that a regular inspection is the best way to prolong the life of roofing material. A roof generally will last at least 15 years, and after that it is wise to keep a close eye on its condition.

A reputable roofing inspector will pay particular attention to flashings (sealing material, usually aluminum shields, around joints such as chimneys or edges where leaking is likely) and to distressed areas such as blisters or cracks. A homeowner, too, can look for such signs of unusual wear.

Roofs generally fall into three categories: those that can be maintained by patching and coating; those that require surfacing with a new membrane; and those that have deteriorated to the extent that they require removal and replacement.

Some roofing contractors will not deal in recoating, but then will offer a guarantee on a completely new roof, perhaps 20 or 25 years.

Most maintenance materials will perform satisfactorily if applied properly before the outer water-tight layer (membrane) has weakened too much, and provided that the flashings, penetrations or distressed areas are repaired before the coating

Consumer tips

is applied. Maintenance roof coatings are ready-to-use protective coatings for surfaces which are exposed to the weather. They also are known as "cold process" roof coatings because no melting or heating is required from their application. They come in liquid or semi-liquid form and can be put on by brush, roller or spray.

There are asphalt-base coatings of the emulsion, solvent and aluminum pigmented type, each with distinct advantages and disadvantages. There also are alkyd-base colored aluminum roof coatings which are recommended for polyurethane foam roofs, and which also can be applied over metal, composition or masonry roofs with adequate drainage. In addition, there are refined coal tar coatings which are for tar and gravel roofs, and which can be used when the roof is subject to standing water.

Homeowners must realize that roofs do not last forever. Life expectancy can be prolonged by planned maintenance and regular inspections. There are several do's and don'ts which will help in taking care of a roof:

- Do
- Apply roof coatings before extensive damage occurs--because coatings alone are unlikely to correct serious problems.
- Make repairs to distressed areas before applying coatings.
- Allow asphalt roofs to weather adequately before applying aluminum roof coating.
- Use reinforcing membrane over badly alligatored roofs.
- Always use a coating that is chemically compatible with the material already on the roof.

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