

Roofing

I have been asked to do a little research on the condition or replacing of roof shingles on our homes. Now that the homes are getting on in years (like us) some are worried about the life of their roof coverings.

This depends on many things, age, type of shingles and exposure. You can visually inspect your roof for cracked, torn, bald or missing shingles. Scan the roof for loose material or wear around chimneys, vents, pipes or other penetrations. Use binoculars or send some young person up, don't go yourself. Getting up there is not so hard but getting back down again can be daunting. Look for an excessive amount of shingle granules (they look like large grains of sand) in the gutters -- this is a sign of advanced wear. If your roof has water damage, don't jump the gun and assume you need to start all over with a brand new roof. Most contractors say that if your roof was properly installed and is less than 15 to 20 years old, it can often be repaired rather than replaced. Check that all bath, kitchen and dryer vents go entirely outside of your home, not just into the attic space.

Home owners with solar panels are curious to what they would need to do if they needed a new roof. I wrote to Sunrun and they offered this advice. "I would be happy to outline the process for replacing a roof that has a solar system on it. We would have a certified technician come out to the home to remove the system. It can then be re-installed once the work on the home is complete. Keep in mind, the homeowner will be responsible for paying for the removal and re-installation of the system, as well as any related storage costs and we will send the homeowner an estimate for this work for their approval. Sunrun will help homeowners coordinate with our service department or one of our partners to do the work." That's so nice of them!



First of all, in my estimation the most damage to roof shingles comes from the sun, the wind and the rain. That part of your roof covered by solar panel is for the most part protected from those elements so should be in pretty good shape. Most roofs have at least a 20 year life span and from what I see in the neighborhood our shingles appear to be in pretty good shape. If Santa hasn't been landing his sleigh on your house top every year then I think you are okay.

If the existing roof on your house is only one layer and there are no problems with the roof deck, a new roof is not necessary. If you are going to re-roof, it is important to consider the ventilation of your attic. You don't want to cut off ventilation to the attic, as its temperature affects the temperature of the rest of your home, which affects how much your HVAC runs. So make sure that if you decide to re-roof, you don't cover up the attic fan or leave holes where the temperature could flux dramatically.

All shingle manufacturers honor the warranty, whether their products are used for a reroof or a new roof. If the job is done correctly, with the new layer of shingles laid flat over the existing shingles, the old roof cushions the new one and serves as a secondary barrier should wind or water ever break through the new shingles. That said, a thorough inspection of the decking (plywood) from inside your attic to see if there is any leakage, mold or sagging could change everything. If you have any of these problems a tear-off and new roof will be the way to go. Missing shingles along the "valley" of your roof could be more problematic as these are points with high leaking potential. While you are inspecting your shingles, you want to pay particular attention to the "tabs" on the roof. Make sure that they are intact. I don't recommend roaming through the attic yourself though. Unless you like the way your ceiling looks after you foot has gone through the sheet rock to say nothing of the damage you could do to yourself. If you are planning to re-do your roof, a good contractor will do the interior inspection and point out any problems.

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