



Roofer Madness

Have your roof done right the first time.



Warning ! This Book could save you thousands of dollars and a lot of grief

Read this booklet

Find out how to choose a roofer who will prevent your worst nightmares and make your project a success.

1) New Roof or Fast Fix? What do you really need?

Unless you know or trust your roofing contractor it is a good idea to get the advice of an independent roofing inspector — not a home inspector but someone who specializes in roof inspections. You may find you need only spend a few hundred dollars in repair now and the expensive reroof project can be safely put off for some years.

Roofs usually start leaking around the areas where there are details (ridges, valleys, vents, chimneys, flashing, etc.). These areas may only need inexpensive repairs which could give you several more trouble free years.

On the other hand the inspection may find some very serious leaking problems that need to be addressed immediately to prevent water damage or rotting. Replace your roof before it leaks to avoid water damage or the hassles of an emergency repair.

Get your roof inspected by someone who is qualified and who will give you honest answers.

2) How long will it Take?

The Variables

- size of roof
- complexity of roof
- size of installation crew

The longer the project takes, the more noise, mess, commotion and general disruption there will be around your home and greater potential for water damage through an open roof. With a smaller building with a simple roof may not be as much of a problem as a larger more complex roof. If plywood decking or rot repairs are required the project could drag on.

Doing the work properly takes a set number of man hours that you don't want to shortcut. The only real way to reduce the time is to increase the size of the crew. Ask "How big is your crew? How many people will show up each day? Will you work everyday until the project is complete?" This is what you need to know to determine how long it will take them in relation to other crews.

3) Is the roofing done right? Who knows . . . ?

If you happen to know what a properly done roof looks like and are happy to go up onto the roof and check it out, you have no worries.

If you know what the critical roof details should look like but you don't want to go up the ladder, option B is to have the roofers take some close up digital photos so you can look at them on the ground. Most established companies have digital cameras now.

Most homeowners are not roofers so they need to relay on someone else to check out the details. If you know your roofer personally or he was referred by someone you trust you may feel safe they will take care of you.

Nothing beats an independent inspection so...

Get an independent inspection from a licensed roof inspector. A very large percentage of new roofs installed today would not pass an inspection from RCABC inspectors. Cedar roofs are a particular problem. Cedar shingles vary, as they are a natural product. Some cedar roofing companies increase their price by up to 20% when they know the roof is going to be inspected because they know their usual standards will not pass. Make a deal with your roofer; you will pay the cost of the inspection if it passes and the roofer will pay for the inspection if it fails. Don't make the final payment until it passes.

4) Caution! Liability Issues

Workers Compensation

Under Workers' Compensation Board legislation, you, as the property owner, are ultimately responsible by law to ensure everyone working on your property is covered by WCB.

If the worker (whether he is a window cleaner, tree trimmer, drywaller or roofer) does not have his own coverage it is up to you to take out coverage with WCB for each worker.

It is possible that the company is registered with WCB but is not in good standing or is delinquent with their account. If this is the case, they are not covered and again you become liable. Don't just take their word that they are covered. Get the company's WCB number and check it out. If they are delinquent or not registered with WCB it may indicate that they are a fly-by-night company or are not financially sound. This should concern you as they may not be around to back up their warranty.

To protect yourself as the home owner, this is what you do:

Get a clearance letter or number from WCB for the company doing the work. This can be done on line at:

www.worksafebc.com >How to obtain a Clearance Letter

or by telephone:

Clearance Section 604-244-6180.

Liability Insurance

Check that your roofer has proper, up-to-date liability insurance that will cover water, fire or other property damage. Many roofers don't have this insurance now as prices have increased and it's harder to qualify.

5) Quality Counts

You have probably added up a column of figures and made a mistake at some point in the past. Most people add them up twice to verify the answer. That is a system of *quality control*.

Even the best roofers can and will make mistakes. Accept the fact that there will be minor deficiencies that will need to be found and corrected on your roof while it is being installed. The important thing here is that the roofing company has a standard system for finding and correcting those deficiencies.

After working hard on your roof for 8 - 10 hours in the hot sun your installer is hungry, tired, wants to finish your job and go home. I can tell you from experience that as good as he may be, he is not the one you want to do the final inspection!

In my 15 years of managing roofing projects I have never gone onto a "finished" job and found it really finished. There's always some non-optimum situation like an exposed nail head, a loose shingle, or debris in the gutters. These are the types of details that will be found even after a good installer is complete. Usually they will take only a few minutes to an hour to correct. What you may find after a poor installer is complete... I won't go into that!

The point is that you need someone to inspect the roof after the installer is done. This can be someone from the same company (if it is a reputable company) or it can be an independent roofing inspector who is familiar with RCABC standards. They need to do a thorough inspection of everything from the last shingle on the roof ridge to the nails being picked up from the driveway.

It is worth noting that the quality of installers' workmanship increases substantially when they know that all their roofs will be inspected by someone other than themselves. The best system is one that not only inspects all the roofs but also corrects the installers as problems come up. This way the quality continues to improve.

6) War Zone or Work Site?

If precautions are not taken before the tear off begins, property can be damaged.

If your property is close to the neighbour's, the old roofing can hit their house as it comes down, leaving black tar marks on the walls. Flower beds can get trampled, bushes and shrubs can be crushed and broken nails can be left on the lawn or driveway.

There are ways to protect your property with tarps and plywood barriers. Every property will have a different approach depending on the roof pitch, access and surroundings. If you have a flat roof and can park a disposal bin right against the house you don't have to worry about this too much. Unfortunately, that is usually not the case.

What to do before you Start

1. Go around your property with the potential roofing contractor and point out the areas you want to protect. Have the contractor propose a solution to protect them and then make sure the solution gets written into the contract. Getting details like this in writing increases the chance that the protection instructions will be passed on to the installer who actually does the work. And you are covered if they don't provide adequate protection which results in some damage.

2. Ask the salesman if the crew will have a magnetic roller to pick up nails. This will be a clue as to how seriously they take the clean up. There is really no other way to get nails out of some surfaces like grass or gravel.

3. Ask your potential roofing contractor how they will keep the water out of your house if it rains. Remember, we live on the “wet coast” and it can rain at any time, unannounced. There are several things that can be done to minimize this risk to almost zero.

- Make sure the crew that shows up is big enough to get the old roof off and the new roof on in a timely manner (two installers and two laborers minimum). If the roof is too big to do in one day, even with a larger crew, then have them do it one section at a time.
- Have an agreement with your contractor to always tarp unfinished roof sections at the end of every day. Never leave a roof open overnight no matter what the forecast is and never let the installer on the job talk you into leaving it exposed overnight. It only takes an hour of rain in the middle of the night to warp your hardwood floors, ruin your cabinets, stain your carpet, wreck your furniture or peel the paint off your walls.
- Ensure the contractor will always have a tarp on the job should the weather change during the day.

7) *First impressions ARE important*

I can't give you any surefire rules that will guarantee the company will be reliable, trustworthy and considerate, but if they don't respect the following courtesies it should put up a red flag.

- Did they show up to do the estimate when they said they were going to or at least call if they got delayed?
- Did they get the quote back to you within a reasonable time or when they said they would?
- Did they answer their calls promptly when you left a message?

- Did they put the things you asked for into the quote? Do you feel you have been understood and an effort has been made to provide what you asked for or said was important to you?

Fundamentally, these are basic manners but they are also clues to the type of company you are dealing with.

8) Warranties - What they Really Mean

Putting on a “30 year Shingle” does not necessarily mean your roof will be replaced (or even repaired) if there is a problem in 10 years. Warranties can be complex. It is actually easier to work out who has the worst warranties. Once you understand the information below, you won’t get caught up in the salesman’s hype about warranties and end up not covered the way you think you are.

There are two parts to the warranty: the materials warranty (supplied by the manufacturer) and the labour warranty (supplied by the installation company).

The Materials Warranty

Most manufacturers only warranty the product and not the installation. This means that if his product does not hold up as it was supposed to and the manufacturer has determined that it was a materials defect (and therefore covered by their warranty), they can do one of two things:

Supply New

The manufacturer will back their truck up to your house and drop off new shingles. It will be up to you to install them. If you have chosen your roofing contractor well, and he is still in business ten years after your roof was installed, and he has given a long labour warranty, you may be able to convince him to come back and install the shingles at no charge to you.

Pay out

Some manufacturers’ warranties don’t replace the shingles but will pay you money instead. This sounds good until you discover that the amount is

prorated (decreased proportionally over time). The usual procedure is to pay the full amount for 5 years and then prorate amounts after that. This means that if your 30 year roof fails in 15 years the company may pay you 30% of what you originally paid for the shingles. The price they pay out will probably not be adjusted for inflation. If it does not include installation it hardly seems worth spending the time to prove their roofing product failed in the first place.

Even “lifetime warranties” are prorated and may not be of much value in 15 to 20 years.

The last bit of bad news about warranties is that most are not “Performance Based”, which means based on whether the shingle stands up and performs the way it is supposed to perform. The majority of manufactures base their warranties on “Water Infiltration”. This means that all the granules can wash off your shingles or they can curl and fade or anything else but if no water gets in then you don’t have a valid warranty claim.

The Labour Warranty

- Does the Installation Company automatically give you a labor warranty in writing with their quote or do you have to ask for it?
- How long is it for?
- Does it cover installing new shingles if it was determined to be a manufactures defect?
- Do you think they would come back in 8 years and install new shingles at no cost to you even if it was the manufacturer’s shingle that broke down?
- You may find that you now know more about warranties than a lot of installation companies. If they can’t answer your questions it’s a bad sign and indicates that they probably don’t have a standard warranty policy.

- Choose the roofing installation company you think will most likely to be in business ten years from now. (They need to be in business to honor their warranty.)

The Good News

There are good roofing contractors and there are some good manufacturer's warranties. Here are some suggestions to help make a good decision.

Questions to ask your Roofing Contractor about the Manufacturer Warranty

- Does the supplier's warranty include installation cost or just material cost?
- Is the warranty value worked out based on the original purchase price of the product or on today's replacement cost?
- Is the material warranty performance based or water infiltration based? Performance based is better.

Keep in mind that if the installers don't install the roofing materials as per the manufacturer's specifications the manufacturer will void the material warranty. So hire a quality minded installation company if you want the manufacturer to back his warranty. The above information will help you to hire a roofing contractor who will put on a leak free, long lasting roof, that will look good, protect your home and save you from ROOFERMADNESS.

Enjoy your new roof.
Doug Kerr



Solutions for You!

1676 W 75th Ave
Vancouver BC • V6P 6G2

Tel: 604.263.0334

Fax: 604.263.1501

www.absoluteroof.ca