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Realities of Re-Roofing

by James R. Ziglinski, C.R.



Now that our summer is drawing to a close, you can bet that the fall winds will come with a vengeance, bringing along plenty of rain and snow. With this in mind, now would be the time to examine what shape your roof is in and determine if recovering is needed in the near future.

At the Milwaukee/NARI Home Improvement Show held in fall, a lot of visitors that attended had questions regarding condensation and came away a bit apprehensive. They originally went to the show seeking answers to their re-roofing questions. What actually occurred was that they were met with even more questions.

At the showcase, new roof coverings of light weight concrete and steel roof panels were introduced. In past years, it was the fiberglass shingles over the asphalt base shingles. They also had a taste of reality at my seminars when they realized that there was a direct relationship between their sweating windows and the fact that their homes had no vents in the soffits or roof. I was asked by some of the show visitors who faithfully subscribe to Wisconsin Home Gallery to clear up some of the new products, procedures, and problems relating to a re-roofing project. They realized that relying on a Mr. Fixit or well-intentioned neighbor would be more costly in the future, and they were very right in thinking so. Access to today's new products and innovations, increased knowledge of trapped moisture and other indoor air pollutants, as well as knowledge of the ever-changing codes make it imperative that home and property owners consider a qualified, licensed, and insured contractor for their project.

Touching on just a few items from past shows, I was asked about re-roofing codes and if permits are required. Every municipality is different. The general rule of thumb regarding permits is that on any job exceeding \$100.00 in the eastern suburbs, a permit will be required, no matter what the job may be. In most areas, when two roof coverings already exist, they must be removed from the roof boards before a new covering is applied. However, in some areas, this code may have changed to reflect the weights of the existing coverings before re-roofing can be applied, due to the many new heavy weight shingles. All debris must be disposed of by the contractor, who may require special dumping permits if the debris happens to be asbestos shingles. In this case, special removal techniques may also apply.

Shingle products today range from the traditional to the bizarre. There is still a large demand for the cedar wood shakes in either the hand split or the uniform butt styles. This market was dented, however, by the introduction of simulated shake roofs, manufactured from fiberglass and composition based shingles. The fiberglass shingles also put quite a dent in the standard asphalt shingle market.

You must, however, be aware of how these shingles are applied. Some shingle manufacturers will not warranty their products against blow off if they are merely stapled on. They will not cover against

Dutch lapped valleys or against capping and curling if the attic area is not properly vented. Structural analysis may be required if you are considering clay tile, light weight concrete, or a heavy duty textured strip shingle. This mainly is to help prevent sagging and to make sure that the shingle weight will still allow for an average Wisconsin snowload.

One of the other questions that was raised during the show was regarding the problem of ice dams. When strip shingles are properly installed, the first course or starter layer is installed upside down or with the tabs cut off, in the case of self-sealing shingles. This allows for the tight fit between the slots of the first layer. The problem with this practice is that it does not allow the self-sealing adhesive strip to seal the first courses of the original roof, as they should be. The first two layers of shingles, therefore, should be hand sealed, as well as the roof/gutter joint. This will help to prevent the ice build up from the gutters from lifting the shingles and working its way back under the layers, which may cause interior damage. This hand sealing is not a code requirement, nor is it mentioned on most installation outlines as printed on shingle wrappers. It is, however, an ethical practice which quality contractors do automatically. To be assured that this is done, insist that it is mentioned in the contract agreement.

If ice shields are used, the size and type should also be mentioned as well as the style and size of the vents to be installed. Make sure your contractor explains how proper venting works and which vents may become intake (leakers) if the wind is in the right direction. If he insists that the vents will not leak, get it in writing. Make sure, if new metal valleys are installed over existing ones, that a thermal break is installed between the two metals. This will help prevent condensation between the two metal areas.

As you can see, re-roofing projects are a bit more complex than they were a few years ago. Make sure that whoever you contract with knows these changes, and most of all that you feel comfortable with the contractor you select. After all, guarantees and warranties are only as good as the ethics of the person who is applying the product.

We hope this information has been helpful to you! If you have any further questions, please visit our website at www.aroundyourhouse.net, or contact Jim at Around Your House.

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