



PILLAR TO POST -
THE PUTNAM TEAM

HOME SERIES: ROOFS AND CHIMNEYS

The roof of a home is not just a protective cover; it's a complex system integral to the house's overall health and durability. Understanding the various elements of roofing, including materials, flashing, chimneys, and more, is crucial when reviewing a home inspector's report. This brochure aims to demystify these components, offering insights into their function, common issues, and maintenance tips. Armed with this knowledge, buyers can better assess the condition of a potential home's roof, making informed decisions about their investment.

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Types of Roofing

Common Roofing Materials

- Asphalt Shingles: Popular for their cost-effectiveness and versatility.
- Metal Roofing: Durable, long-lasting, and available in various styles.
- Tile Roofing: Clay or concrete tiles are known for their durability and resistance to fire.
- Wood Shingles and Shakes: Offer a natural look but require more maintenance.
- Slate Roofing: One of the most durable materials, slate is heavy and expensive but can last over a century.

Types of Asphalt Shingles

1. Three-Tab Shingles

Three-tab asphalt shingles are characterized by their cutout tabs that make them appear to be three separate pieces. They are the most economical option, offering a flat and uniform look. Their lifespan typically ranges between 20 to 30 years, depending on the climate and maintenance.

2. Architectural Style Shingles

Architectural (or dimensional) shingles are thicker and offer a more varied, contoured visual appeal, mimicking the look of natural wood shake or slate roofing. These shingles are constructed with two or more layers bonded together for a richer, multi-dimensional appearance and enhanced durability. Architectural shingles have a higher wind resistance, improved aesthetic appeal, and can last 30 to 50 years.

3. Luxury Style Shingles

Luxury asphalt shingles are the highest quality of asphalt shingles available, designed to replicate the appearance of slate or cedar shake roofing at a fraction of the cost. They offer superior aesthetics, durability, and are significantly heavier than other asphalt shingles, providing enhanced resistance to weather conditions. Their lifespan extends beyond 50 years with proper maintenance.

Recognizing the signs of deterioration early can significantly extend the life of an asphalt shingle roof through timely maintenance or replacement. Here are common indicators:

1. Curling or Buckling Shingles

Curling occurs when the edges of the shingle turn upward, while buckling appears as a visible wave across the shingle. Both are signs of age, excessive heat, or underlayment issues.

2. Missing Granules

Over time, asphalt shingles lose their granules, leading to bare spots. This can be accelerated by hail or heavy rain. Check your gutters for granule buildup as an early sign of shingle wear.

3. Cracked Shingles

Cracked shingles can result from wind damage and can lead to leaks. Regular inspections can help spot this deterioration early.

4. Algae or Moss Growth

While not directly harmful, algae or moss can hold moisture against the roof's surface, potentially damaging the shingles over time. It also detracts from the roof's aesthetic appeal.

5. Leaks and Water Damage

Signs of water damage in your attic or ceilings may indicate failing shingles. It's crucial to address leaks promptly to prevent structural damage to your home.

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Flashing and Chimneys

Flashing

Flashing is a thin material (usually metal) installed to prevent water from penetrating the junctions between roofing materials and roof fixtures. Proper flashing around chimneys, vents, and where the roof meets walls is critical for preventing leaks.

Chimneys

Chimneys not only serve as outlets for smoke and gas but also as critical structural elements that require regular inspection and maintenance. Issues like crumbling mortar, blockage, and improper flashing can lead to water intrusion and structural damage.

Roof Maintenance and Common Issues

Regular maintenance is key to extending the life of your roof. This includes cleaning gutters, inspecting for damage, and ensuring proper ventilation to prevent moisture buildup. Common issues include:

- **Leaks:** Often due to damaged or missing shingles, or compromised flashing.
- **Pooling Water:** A particular concern for flat roofs, where improper drainage can lead to water damage.
- **Wear and Tear:** Environmental factors like wind, rain, and temperature fluctuations can wear down roofing materials over time.

Understanding Your Home Inspection Report

The roofing section of your home inspection report will detail the condition of shingles, tiles, or other roofing materials, the state of flashing and chimneys, and any signs of leaks or water damage. Familiarize yourself with terms such as "lifespan," "wear patterns," and "flashing integrity" to understand the report's findings and implications.

A well-maintained roof is essential for the protection and longevity of your home. Understanding the elements that make up your roof, from the materials used to the importance of proper flashing and chimney maintenance, equips you to make informed decisions about your home purchase. Remember, addressing roof issues early can prevent more significant problems down the road. Use this guide to navigate your home inspection report effectively and consider consulting with roofing professionals for comprehensive assessments or repairs.