



Pacific^{EST. 1968}



— HOMEOWNERS GUIDE TO —
Maintaining a Healthy Roof



Maintaining a Healthy Roof

Keeping your roof in good shape year round can seem like a daunting task. So many things can go wrong. A hailstorm one week can lead to a leak the next. That same leak can quickly spiral out of control until it causes extensive damage inside your roof and ceiling. If the problem is left unaddressed for too long, you may end up having to replace a large area of your ceiling or even your entire roof.

For reasons like these, roofs can cause homeowners a lot of stress. We've created this comprehensive guide to help you understand how to keep your roof healthy throughout the year and avoid headaches like the one described above. By taking some time a couple weekends out of the year to perform inspections and maintenance, you might prevent a disaster. You'll also protect your budget by extending the life of your roof.



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HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE MY ROOF INSPECTED?

Have a professional inspect your roof at least once every year to ensure you don't have any problems—large or small. It often takes a trained eye to recognize weak points and certain types of damage in your roofing system. Also strongly consider having your roof inspected after any violent storm—especially one that produces strong winds or hail. It's important to fix a problem area as soon as you recognize it and before the damage creates a large, expensive problem.

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1. REMOVE DEBRIS

Once or twice a year, you should have any branches, leaves, or other debris that has accumulated on your roof removed. We recommend having a professional do this for you to avoid causing damage to your roof's structure or hurting yourself. If you do climb on your roof, make sure the surface is completely dry first.

2. CHECK FOR MOSS AND ALGAE

Inspect your roof for moss and algae. While algae can leave black, ugly streaks on your roof, because it lacks roots, it won't harm your roof like moss. If moss isn't removed, it can spread, thicken, and trap moisture, eventually causing your roof to deteriorate. Moss roots can also break the seal between your shingles and make their way underneath, lifting up their edges and leaving your roof exposed to the elements. If you have moss or algae growing on your roof, have it removed as soon as possible to prevent progressive problems.



3. KEEP YOUR GUTTERS CLEAN

At least twice a year—once in the fall and once in the spring—you should have your gutters and downspouts cleaned. If you don't, leaves, pine needles, and twigs can accumulate there and block water from flowing through the system freely. This could result in water spilling over the sides of your gutters, running down your siding, and puddling near your home's foundation.

Avoid water damage and flooding by removing any debris before the rainy season. Gutters should be gently scrubbed with a soft brush and then rinsed using a garden hose to clean them thoroughly. A hose can also be used to check for leaks throughout your gutter system; make sure that any holes or cracks are repaired.

Perform a visual inspection to check for sagging, peeling paint, rotting, missing caulk, or any other problems. Make sure your gutters have the right slope—half an inch for every 10 feet—so water can properly flow through them, and make sure your downspouts release water a safe distance from your home's foundation.

4. LOOK FOR LEAKS

If you can, look inside your attic at the ceiling for any staining, which can indicate that you have a roof leak. Also check for signs of water damage, such as mildew, mold, or rotting. Your roof should be inspected directly above a problem area for the following:

- Missing or loose shingles
- Missing granules
- Cracks in shingles
- Warping or peeling shingles
- Exposed nail heads

IF ANY DAMAGE IS FOUND, IT SHOULD BE REPAIRED IMMEDIATELY—BEFORE IT WORSENS.





Why Should I Get a Minor Roof Leak Repaired?

The reason professional inspections and regular maintenance are so important is that small, common problems can easily be overlooked if you're not specifically looking for them. By the time you notice that something's wrong (like when water starts leaking through your kitchen ceiling), the problem has already become large and costly to fix. A professional roofing inspector can pinpoint current and potential problem areas.

Chimneys, vents, and pipes that protrude from your roof can also spring leaks. If caulking dries out, the seal around the protrusion will break, and water can easily seep into your home. Skylights can also become problem areas. Your roof inspector should check these areas to ensure materials are still in good shape and no water is leaking into your roof around them.

Moisture is a roof's worst enemy and is at the root of most roofing problems. Moisture can lead to all sorts of serious issues—mold, mildew, rot, poor indoor air quality, water spots, deterioration, damaged materials, and more. Catching a minor roof leak—before it gets out of control—can save you money and heartache. Fix a small leak as soon as you notice it. A repair now could save you from having to replace your entire roof a little later.



HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S TIME FOR A NEW ROOF?

No roof will last forever. While replacing a roof probably isn't at the top of your list of favorite things to do, we all have to bite the bullet at some point. The question is when is the right time? Here are some signs to help you identify a failing roof:

- Your shingle roof is over 20 years old.
- You notice brown or dark-colored water spots on the ceiling, signifying a leaking roof and mold growth.
- You find granules in your gutters after it rains.
- Your shingles are starting to curve upwards, crack, or break off your roof.
- Your roof is beginning to sag.

If you notice any of these warning signs, call a roofer immediately to inspect your roof for you. Don't be surprised if it's time for an upgrade. Don't try to climb up on your roof to inspect it yourself when it may be failing; this can create unsafe conditions for non-professionals.

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A ROOFING ESTIMATE?

Repairing or replacing your roof can be a big deal, so it's important to work with a trustworthy professional roofing contractor so the job is done right. To ensure you hire a great company, ask these questions when you receive a quote for your project.

- Is the quote itemized and detailed?
- Is the estimate for the entire roof or just the shingles?
- Does the quote include the cost of removing and disposing of old shingles?
- Does it include the cost of permits?
- Does it include a start and end date?
- What are the payment terms?

Learn more details in our blog post, "What You Need to Look For in a Roofing Estimate."



How Do I Protect My Roof From Ice And Snow During the Winter?

Snow, ice, cold, and condensation can all cause serious damage to your roof during the winter if you're not prepared. Snow can melt and then refreeze before flowing completely off your roof, forming ice dams at the edge of your roof and in your gutters. Water can continue to pool behind this dam and eventually cause water to seep into your home or ice to lift materials out of place so they break off.

If enough snow piles onto your roof, it's possible for it to slide off and come crashing to the ground unexpectedly, landing on anything or anyone unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Cold temperatures can also harm your roof by making materials more brittle and susceptible to breaking.

So, how do you protect your roof and home from all the hazardous elements that may be thrown at you during the cold season? We have a few solutions for you to consider.



1. INSULATION & VENTILATION

There are a few different methods for preventing ice dams from damaging your home. The first and most effective way is to go straight to the source of the problem, which is often inadequate insulation and/or ventilation inside the attic. When heat from inside your home rises to your attic, it creates warm patches across your roof. This is where snow and ice melt and flow towards the eaves, where they often refreeze and create problems.

By sufficiently insulating your attic and ensuring your ventilation system is expelling heat outside properly, you should solve your ice dam problem. This is also an effective way to avoid condensation in your attic and roof leaks through the ceiling in the winter.

2. HEAT TAPE

Another way to avoid ice dams is by installing heat tape. While this doesn't deal with the underlying issue of insufficient insulation and ventilation, it can effectively prevent too much ice from building up on your roof and in your gutters. Heat tape creates channels where melted water can flow freely off your roof, through your gutters, and onto the ground.

3. ROOF ICE MELT (RIM) SYSTEM

Similar to heat tape, the RIM system melts snow and ice on your roof to avoid ice dam buildup. Thermally conductive panels are installed across the roof to melt all the snow and ice on its surface.

4. SNOW RETENTION SYSTEM

This type of system is useful for buildings with metal or steeply pitched roofs, where snow and ice can easily slide off and drop to the ground with dangerous force. Snow stops and snow fences are two options for holding snow on your roof until it melts so it doesn't crash to the ground unexpectedly.



About Pacific Sheet Metal

We hope our guide helps you maintain a healthy roof all year long and that you can catch problems early to avoid having to deal with massive issues later. If you have any questions or concerns or you'd like your roof inspected to ensure it's ready for the next season, we'd love to help.

Pacific Sheet Metal is based in the Roaring Fork Valley and has been serving Western Colorado since 1968. We offer a variety of roofing-related services, including roof repairs, gutter services, waterproofing, ice dam prevention, and more. We also install asphalt, metal, flat, shake, tile, and slate roofs. If you'd like a quote on any of our products or services, click on the button below!

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