

Preparing for a New Roof

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For many Commercial Building owners and Home Owners Associations, re-roofing is right around the corner.

There are many different types of roofing materials for both flat and pitched roofs. Most come with a pretty decent guarantee that covers material and some even cover labor, should anything go wrong down the road.

With an increase in the term of the warranty comes increased cost, these can range from 10 to 50 years, with corresponding increases in the warranty cost. Architectural shingles are very affordable and carry 30 to 50 year warranties. For flat roofs, single ply or hot asphalt membranes typically carry 10 to 20 year guarantees.

While recent improvements in roofing materials is great news for consumers, the best roof invented can be your worst nightmare if it's not installed properly. Installing a roof requires special training and attention to detail. Since roofs are intended to last many years, selecting a roofing company that will likely be around for years is also extremely important. Here's how to get ready for a proper roof job:

- Hire only licensed roofing contractors that specialize in the kind of roof you want. If you have a multiple year roofing repair schedule, it's very important to use the same roofing company even if it costs a bit more money. When different contractors are used, sorting out repair, maintenance and warranties becomes nearly impossible.
- Get at least 2 or 3 bids from qualified contractors, but recognize that even though all contractors are licensed, not all do the same quality of installation. In that way, it's like getting a haircut. Even though all are trained the same, there are some you just won't go to.
- Insurance – Ask for a proof of insurance certificate and call the broker listed and verify it is in force. In the case of and HOA be sure that there is no exclusion for working on HOA's. Almost all policies DO exclude HOA work unless the contractor has purchased a separate rider.
- Check contractor licensing with the appropriate state agency. Most states keep licensing and insurance information plus a history of complaints made.
- Call at least three references from each of your bidders to inquire about performance.

Have a written set of specifications so that all bidders are quoting on the exact same scope of work.

Those specifications should include:

- Removal and disposal of existing roof.
- Repair of damaged sheathing.
- Protection of landscaping, decks, etc.
- Properly installed sheathing if required.
- Proper underlayment.
- Proper attic ventilation and insulation if applicable.

- Compliance with State Energy codes. In California these are very strict
- Gutters and downspouts, if necessary.
- Rain protection during course of work.
- Regular debris clean up.
- A sample copy of the manufacturers warranty prior to signing the contract

There are building code and product specifications that need to be considered. It's recommended to remove the existing roof system so that the roof deck can be properly inspected and repaired, and to ventilate any damp or moist areas.

If a new type of roofing is being considered that is heavier than the original, like tile or slate, a structural engineer should calculate the weight load requirements. It may require structural enhancements to carry the additional load.

Since a roofing project is always costly, it's worth hiring an attorney to prepare a contract which includes the manufacturer's installation specifications. Besides getting the work done properly, getting it done within a certain time frame is important.

The payment schedule is extremely important. DO NOT enter into an agreement that requires prepayment for labor or materials. This is a red flag for a contractor that is financially strapped or using your money to pay for other bills. Making several progress payments is normal but the payments should be based on materials being delivered and actual work completed. Of course, never tender final payment until all work is completed and the contractor provides a properly executed lien waiver. Finally, assemble a roofing file which includes the contract, product information and warranty. It will be typical for you not to receive the warranty until the job is paid for.

A roofing job takes time, money, scheduling and diligent input. You will live with the results, good or bad, for many years.