

## AROUND THE HOUSE

# Checklist can help hire roofers

The roof is 20 years old and beginning to look like Ruffles. You think you may have heard that terrible "drip, drip, drip" sound last night and you've decided it's time to have that new roof installed. The questions are many. How much? Whom do I trust? How do I know I'm getting a good job?

The questions are important. Many of the homes we inspect have new roofs and many have defective workmanship. One brand-new roof we reviewed was missing some roof flashings, had the wrong type of flashings in areas and had improperly installed valleys, and the shingles didn't even come to the edge of the roof!

In some cases, fly-by-night companies will offer a free roof inspection and then insist the roof needs immediate replacement. Never over have a roof reshingled under these conditions. Always seek out additional estimates and reviews to be sure you aren't being swindled.

The following checklist should help you along the path of hiring the right contractors.

## Guide

1. Use only licensed contractors. The salesperson should have a copy of state

licensure with them.

2. Ask who will be doing the work — an employee or a part-time subcontractor.

3. Find out how long the company has been in the roofing business and ask for references from two or three years ago. Check them out.

4. Ask for the company's insurance company to send you current proof of insurance. You want to see both liability and workers compensation insurance. Without it, if a worker falls off the roof, you become liable. It is important that the insurance company send the document directly (don't worry, they do this all the time); otherwise the insurance may have expired for non-payment.

5. Obtain a copy of the roofer's warranty. Make sure it is specific. Insist that the contractor be responsible for workmanship problems should the shingle manufacturer state the job wasn't installed according to its specifications.

6. Ask the company to agree, in writing, to meet National Roofing Contractors Association and the shingle manufacturer's standards of practice. This is fair to both you and the roofer because it establishes a written standard of practice by which the job can be judged.

It eliminates subjective notions that you or the contractor may have.

7. Insist that the contractor pull a city permit. A contractor who doesn't pull a permit, or worse, asks for the homeowner to pull a permit is likely not reputable and increases the likelihood that you will be unhappy.

8. Don't pay more than 25 percent down on the job. A roofer who asks for more may not be financially sound and may walk away before a satisfactory job is completed. Obtain a Full Waiver of Lien, once the job is paid for, to avoid a lien being placed on the home.

9. Don't worry about claims about asphalt vs. fiberglass shingles. Despite claims to the contrary, both products can provide satisfactory performance for years to come. Asphalt shingles have the edge for cold weather installations (they break less easily) and may hide surface distortions better, but otherwise a 20-year fiberglass shingle should perform like a 20-year asphalt shingle.

10. Ask that the roofer install ice and weather shield at the roof edges, around through roof projections such as chimneys, and in any valleys or difficult-to-seal areas on the roof. This remarkable product has prevented

more roof leaks than any other roofing innovation in decades.

11. Have the roofer calculate the need for new vents. The majority of roofs we inspect are underventilated. Adequate ventilation can help to protect the roof from decay and extend the life of shingles. In Michigan's hot, humid climate, proper ventilation is a must.

12. Develop a checklist like this and present it to the roofer. Tell the roofers that their quote will be compared against others on the same basis.

By following a few rules of practice, you can lessen the likelihood of getting an unsatisfactory roofing job. By using a checklist to compare all companies who bid, you will quickly eliminate some of the fly-by-night companies and provide an advantage to the reputable companies from whom you really want to choose.

*Around the House, by the AmeriSpec home inspection service, 1378 S. Main, Plymouth, instructs homeowners about the basics of home maintenance and repair. If you have a question, write to: Around the House/At Home, The Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.*

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