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Roofing: You get what you pay for

Q: I noticed that my shingles are curling on my roof. I know that it is an indication that I will need a new roof soon. I have contacted some local small companies, as well as larger ones. I was shocked to see huge price differences. Could you explain how it is they come up with these?



A. Pricing variations could be the result of several different factors. Here are some details about where I think the differences in pricing may be:

1. Lumber - Depending on how long your roof may have been leaking (if at all), you may need some new wood underneath your new shingles. Some contractors opt to add in an amount they think may be necessary to cover this cost. Being that no one really knows how much rotted wood may be on the roof until it is stripped, some contractors will not figure on any lumber in their estimate which helps to keep their bid lower.

2. Shingles - One contractor may bid a job using a 20-year shingle, yet another may be bidding the job using a 25-year shingle. The price difference on the 25-year shingle is small per bundle, but it adds up quickly on an entire roof.

3. Strip vs. recover - Stripping a roof is always more expensive than a recover (installing new shingles on top of existing). Local and state codes require a roof to have no more than two layers so the contractor should bid accordingly.

4. Insurance - Any time you have any work done to your home, make sure that the contractor carries insurance. This will always add to the price, however, if the contractor who does not have insurance falls off your roof, guess who he must sue. The answer would be you personally as your homeowner's insurance would not cover the claim.

Ask the contractor, before they start the work, for a copy of their current insurance policy if you are concerned.

5. Here today, gone tomorrow - Unfortunately, I have seen several cases of the "smaller contractor" getting the job due to the low bid, and then taking off with the deposit, never to return to do the work. Make sure the person doing the job is licensed through the state of Michigan, so someone can hold them accountable if they decide to do this.

6. Slope - Never seeing your house, I am assuming that the roof has at least a

4/12 pitch. This is the minimum requirement to shingle a roof. Otherwise the contractor would need to apply a torch down material instead of conventional shingles. This means that if a roof has too low of a pitch, shingles cannot be applied due to poor ice, snow or water runoff. Shingle manufacturers will also avoid the warranty if shingles are applied to anything less than a 4/12 pitch.

7. Venting - A roof needs to breathe so roof vents and soffit vents are a must. Some contractors like to install roof vents which are fine, but others prefer to use ridge vent which makes the roof look nicer. Ridge vents are more aesthetically pleasing, however they are much more expensive than the standard vent.

Hopefully, I have answered your question for you. The best way to protect all parties of a contract is to have everything spelled out on paper before signing. Good Luck!

Mat Vivona, Father & Son Construction, Troy, 810-585-5500, www.father-son-const.com

For your home improvement questions or a copy of our roster book, call Gayle Walters, executive director of the NARI-Michigan Remodeling Association at 810-478-8215. Questions can be mailed to the association office at PO Box 1531563, Livonia, Mich. 48153.

Members of the association include professional contractors, wholesalers, manufacturers, consultants and lenders representing all facets of residential and light commercial remodeling.

Members also answer questions on "Home Improvement Radio," with Murray-Gula on WEXL-AM, 1340, 1-2 p.m. Saturdays. Call in your questions at 810-544-1340.

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