

# Roof & Attic Inspections

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Look up. Look way up. Have you ever wondered what was really going on under those roof shingles? Most homeowners have never seen, or would want to see what's in the attic of their home. Gone are the days when attic spaces were accessible, and used for storage

and mechanical equipment. At least when the Christmas lights were retrieved, it provided an opportunity to take a quick check for leaks.

In the construction of today's residential homes, the roof system is less accessible but still forms an integral part of the building, and is a key element for any home inspection. A roof inspection should begin on the outside and finish with a complete inspection of the attic space on the inside.

An outside inspection includes investigation of the roof surface, drainage, openings, flashings, inside structure, and ventilation. The inspector is looking for clues on the surface of the roof that can help determine the current condition of the roof system.

Asphalt composite shingles are the most commonly used roof surface materials. The inspector assesses how many layers of shingles may be in place. Often when re-roofing, the owner will opt to put new shingles over the existing ones. This is an acceptable practice, however, too many layers can add a significant amount of weight to the roof structure. Multiple layers

may not be recommended by the manufacturer, and can affect the warranty. Roof surfaces wear differently depending on the direction each side is facing. The sun, along with other weather-related elements contributes to the life span of the shingles.

Ventilation is a key element in determining the condition of the roof. An adequate amount of air is required under the roof surface in the attic. This ensures that the insulation works properly for heating and cooling, and that the undersides of the shingles don't deteriorate from variations in temperature. The inspector will look for signs of water penetration, adequate ventilation and insulation, as well as the underside roof boards and trusses.

Most inspectors will perform their investigation from the ground and edge of the roof without walking the roof surface. Walking on a roof can cause damage to the shingle surface. Weather conditions, along with the pitch of the roof, can determine if the roof is accessible. Ensure that your inspector has fall protection training and uses the required safety equipment before they climb any roof, on your behalf.

Interior attic inspections are usually done from the access hatch. Because of the design of most newer roof structures, the access is limited. Just like the roof surface inspection, the inspector needs to have the proper training to enter an attic space to ensure his safety, and the safety of the property.

A proper inspection of the roof system can give you the peace of mind you need to move forward. However, the inspector can only look for clues of current concerns, or may detect evidence of past problems in areas that are accessible. It is important to understand the limitations of the inspection, on the day it is performed.

In subsequent columns we'll talk about the PDI and Warranty inspection on a brand new home. Send your comments and questions to: [info@bookahomeinspection.com](mailto:info@bookahomeinspection.com).

## HOUSE TIPS

- ➔ **When plugging an appliance into an outlet and there is little or no friction, it is time to replace the plug.**
- ➔ **Always ensure that electrical switches and outlets have protective cover plates securely on place to avoid possible electrocution**
- ➔ **Knob and Tube wiring is considered to be outdated and unsafe primarily due to the lack of grounding so check with your insurance company for coverage restrictions and plan on an upgrade**

## Our readers asked us...

**Q...** We recently had a home inspection before buying a 15-year-old house. Just after we moved in we noticed a watermark on the ceiling in our bedroom. If the roof is leaking, should the inspector have told us about it?

**A...** It is virtually impossible for an inspection to predetermine a leak in a roof, or a foundation unless it was leaking on the day of the inspection, or there were reported signs to indicate a problem. First check your inspection report carefully for information about the roof and attic inspection, and then call your inspector to explain the report.

**Q...** Our house is only a year old. When I look at my roof from the street, I can see the rafter lines through the shingles. Is this right?

**A...** It's not right or wrong. It may be a combination of materials that were used on the roof deck, and poor ventilation in the attic. Check with your builder, or municipal building department to determine if the material used for the roof decking was in keeping with approved plans and codes for your area. Also do a comparison by looking at neighbouring homes.



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