

Is it time to repair, or replace, your roof?

The kind of weather we've had this year — a harsh winter, spring storms with high winds, and now scorching temperatures — can accelerate the wear and tear on the roof of your home. This might be a good time to check the integrity of your roof and repair or, if necessary, replace it.

A roof's life depends on the materials used, weather conditions, care taken during the installation process and the level of maintenance performed. Even the best shingles can fall victim to the elements, and weather-related deterioration can lead to leaks.

Among the many types, styles and sizes of shingles, fiberglass asphalt is, by far, the most common. Leading manufacturers include Owens Corning, GAF, Elk, Atlas and Certain Teed. Good-quality shingles ordinarily last from 20 to 30 years before needing replacement. Still, even these roofs should be inspected regularly, if you don't want to replace the shingles before their life expectancy is up.

"Roofs take a pounding from the sun, rain, snow and sleet," said Joseph Kovach of Kovach Roofing of Pompton Plains (kovachroofing.com).

"A (new) roof is a valuable, smart investment that can also dramatically enhance the look of a home," said Chet Janiec of Janiec Roofing, Lodi (janiecroofing.biz).

Both Janiec and Kovach run full-service roofing companies that handle new installation, restoration, maintenance and repairs. They answer many of the same questions for prospective customers:

■ **How do I know when it's time for a new roof?** Typically, you should start considering one after about 25 years. A new roof could be required sooner if you notice that the shingles are starting to curl, crack, blister or split. Excessive granules in the gutters or at the bottom of the downspouts are other indications that the roof's lifespan is ending.

■ **How do I avoid replacing a roof before its lifespan is up?** A periodic roof inspection should be performed, because undetected leaks can cause costly home repairs. How often a roof should be in-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARA CONTENT

The color and pattern of these roof shingles, by Tamko Building Products, Inc., were chosen to complement the brick exterior of this home.

spected depends on its age and on weather conditions. Homeowners shouldn't wait until they see ceiling stains — roof inspections should be a part of a regular routine.

■ **Can homeowners perform this inspection themselves?** Yes, but working on any roof, even one with a moderate slope, can be dangerous. Let someone know you are going up there. Only work in fair weather conditions, wear rubber-soled shoes and make sure the roof surface is dry and clean.

■ **How long does it take to replace a roof?** This depends on the size of roof and the number of valleys, dormers, and differing pitches. It can take as little as a day or, in an extreme case, two weeks or more.

■ **How much does a new roof cost?** Most companies charge by the square foot, but even that number varies based on the

number of valleys, dormers and pitches. Both the Janiec and the Kovach websites have price quote options.

■ **Do clean gutters protect a roof?**

Yes. Gutters route water from a roof to a spot where it can drain away from the house. This protects not just the siding, windows, doors and foundations, but also the roof, itself. To do their job, gutters and downspouts must be clear of debris. If they are not, drain outlets will dam up and rainwater will back up. This will create pools of water on the roof that will seep under shingles and into the home.

■ **What else should a homeowner know about roofing?** When people notice a leak, they often miscalculate the level of difficulty involved in tracing the source. Though water may be trickling from a certain place, it does not mean that the source

of the leak is in that same area.

"The key is keeping the roof in good condition and repairing leaks as soon as they are detected," Kovach explained. "That not only saves the roof itself from larger damages, but it also saves the rest of your home as well. You can't wait until water stains appear on the ceilings to have the roof inspected."

"Many homeowners, especially in these economic times, choose to re-roof over existing shingles," Janiec said. "That saves them a little money in the short term, but it will diminish the overall life of the roof and they'll have to pay more in the long run. By removing the old shingles at once and installing new layers, you increase the likelihood that the (new) roof will last for 30 years."

— DOUG SCANCARELLA