



## ASPHALT SHINGLE ROOF SYSTEMS

A HOMEOWNERS GUIDE for INSPECTION,  
MAINTENANCE and REPAIR

NATIONAL ROOFING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION





# A NEW RESOURCE FOR CONSUMERS

## NRCA RELEASES its MAINTENANCE GUIDE for ASPHALT SHINGLE ROOF SYSTEMS

by Maciek Rupar

**N**RCA has published *Asphalt Shingle Roof Systems—A Homeowners Guide for Inspection, Maintenance and Repair*, a 30-page booklet intended for homeowners and residential property managers. It provides roofing industry guidelines for roof system inspections and proactive maintenance for asphalt shingle roof systems. NRCA hopes the guide will raise awareness of the importance of asphalt shingle roof system maintenance among consumers and provide best practice advice that quickly can be put into action.

### Development

The new guide is the latest addition to NRCA's resources for consumers. It is among several publications NRCA publishes to help educate consumers (see "Another resource," page 36).

The momentum to develop a homeowner's guide for asphalt shingle roof system inspection and maintenance came from NRCA's Steep-slope Repair Manual Task Force. The task force first met in July 2019 with the objective of developing a technical best-practices manual for the maintenance and repair of steep-slope roof systems.

During the course of discussion, task force members recognized NRCA was well-positioned to address the need for an owner's manual and decided to pursue the opportunity.

The task force focused its initial efforts on asphalt shingle roof systems because of their prevalence in the U.S. residential roofing market.

### Preventive maintenance

Owners of commercial buildings have long recognized the benefits of regular preventive maintenance in protecting and preserving their roof systems. In fact, for many roofing contractors, roof system maintenance work is a significant part of their operations. However, roofing contractors find many

homeowners do not perform routine roof system inspections and/or maintenance.

Homeowners should think of scheduled roof system inspections the same way they think of scheduled services for their heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems. Homeowners commonly rely on HVAC contractors to perform regular service to ensure their comfort is not disrupted by equipment failure, especially during periods of hot or cold weather. The same rationale should apply to roof systems. Proactive care will help extend a roof system's service life and preserve its integrity during severe weather.

Regular inspections and preventive maintenance performed by professional roofing contractors help identify problems early when they can be corrected relatively easily and before they become widespread. This approach can reveal root causes of future leaks before they occur. With an established program and relationship with a professional roofing contractor, response time to address emergencies is reduced. Also, ongoing maintenance allows for a planned approach to future roofing-related expenses.

Scheduled inspections are the foundation of a roof system maintenance program. NRCA recommends performing scheduled roof system inspections at least twice per year, preferably in the spring and fall. Asphalt shingle roof systems are subjected to the most wear during periods of below-freezing temperatures and periods of the most intense sun and heat. Scheduled spring and fall inspections allow prompt identification of seasonal wear so immediate attention can be given to all identified problems and the roof can be prepared for the next season.

Special or emergency inspections should be performed as needed. Additional inspections are suggested after any severe weather event such as a hailstorm or hurricane; before and after any work is performed on the roof or in areas adjacent to the roof; and after there has been other



## Another resource

In 2014, NRCA published *Homeowners Guide to Asphalt Shingle Roof Systems* to help homeowners during the critical time of preparing for a roof system replacement. A new roof system represents a substantial investment, and replacing a roof may be the only time during ownership a typical homeowner proactively is involved in what happens to the roof. The guide addresses questions of roof system design and construction, roofing contractor selection, preparation of a reroofing estimate and contract, defining a scope of work and selecting roofing materials. If you are a roofing contractor involved in asphalt shingle roof system installations and prefer dealing with educated customers, this guide can help you discuss reroofing with prospective customers. It is available at [shop.nrca.net](http://shop.nrca.net).

damage affecting homes in the area such as a fire. Then, repairs can be performed immediately.

Roof system inspections should be performed by someone who understands the design and basic components of the roof system. Many professional roofing contractors provide this service for a fee.

A roof system inspection should include a thorough visual inspection of the roof system and adjacent surfaces such as sidewalls and chimneys. A few simple maintenance procedures always should be included as part of preventive maintenance: cleaning out gutters and downspouts; removing debris from the roof and checking for associated physical damage; replacing missing or damaged caulk; and cleaning and painting surfaces that show corrosion or damaged paint.

## Emergencies

When a roof system is damaged by severe weather, fire or an accident, emergency repairs need to be performed quickly to protect inhabitants and the property. Emergency repairs generally are considered temporary and should be as simple as possible. The intent of emergency repairs should be to safely and efficiently keep damage from spreading. A professional roofing contractor should make the emergency repairs and return to make permanent repairs as soon as conditions permit.

## New equipment

It is not uncommon for a roof system inspector to find something was added to an asphalt shingle roof system after installation. Common examples are satellite dishes, photovoltaic systems, solar water heating systems, and internet and cable service connections. Unfortunately, in many instances, the new equipment does not make a proper connection to the roof. The installing tradesperson and/or homeowner may be unfamiliar with correct flashing methods and the asphalt shingle manufacturer's requirements for such work. Incorrect or substandard work of this type can damage a roof system or invalidate a roof system warranty. NRCA recommends homeowners seek the advice and help of professional roofing contractors before adding new equipment to asphalt shingle roof systems.

## Additional information

The guide provides definitions of necessary terms consumers need to understand to effectively communicate with roofing professionals.

There also is a brief discussion of manufacturers' and contractors' warranties. The guide highlights the importance of understanding warranty terms and conditions, points out common exclusions in warranties, and notes it is important specific asphalt shingle products are identified to ensure repairs use correct materials and methods.

The guide also recommends a homeowner start and maintain a historical record of his or her roof system beginning at the time of installation. A contractor agreement that includes detailed information about the scope of work and materials is a solid foundation for a roof historical record. Subsequent inspections, maintenance and emergencies affecting the roof should be recorded. This information is valuable for determining problem root causes and planning future maintenance work.

In addition, the guide addresses factors affecting roof system performance. It includes descriptions and a few illustrations of a variety of conditions, such as natural and manmade causes of wear, conditions related to roof system design and installation, and issues related to building components interfacing asphalt with roof systems.

A roof system that is designed, installed and maintained well will last longer than one where design, material and/or installation workmanship quality were lacking or a roof system that receives no maintenance.

The guide helps homeowners appreciate how roof system design, installation choices, materials, methods used for maintenance and the surrounding environment affect performance and service life length of asphalt shingle roof systems.

A homeowner roof system inspection checklist is provided in the appendix. This may be used to log roof system inspection findings and communicate them to a professional roofing contractor.

## Share the information

If you install and/or service asphalt shingle roof systems, I encourage you to use the new guide as a sales and educational tool with homeowners and residential property managers. For example, the guide could be handed to a customer when a roof system warranty is issued. Print copies of *Asphalt Shingle Roof Systems—A Homeowners Guide for Inspection, Maintenance and Repair* may be purchased in bulk packages from the NRCA Bookstore at [shop.nrca.net](http://shop.nrca.net). NRCA members may download the PDF version for free. 📄🔗

**MACIEK RUPAR** is an NRCA director of technical services.