

ROSIE'S ROOFING

Consumer Guide



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Rosie's Roofing Consumer Guide

On those rare occasions when it rains in Arizona and you have a leak, you may wonder if you need a brand-new roof, especially if your house is 10 to 15 years old or more.

During the past few years, many new roofing products have come on the market. Suddenly, choosing materials can get very complicated in a hurry.

And as for cost estimates, much more is involved than the materials alone. Every home has issues that raise the price: What kind of access is there to your roof? How many sheets of underlayment are beneath shingles or tiles? Can you lower the old roofing materials easily onto the ground? Are there electrical wires to watch for? Is the roof more than 15 feet high?

Another unknown is the condition of your roof deck. Is there rotten wood, decking, rafters or fascia that needs to be replaced? Some of this cannot be ascertained until the old roof is removed.

Following are advantages and drawbacks of various types of roofing:

Flat Roofs:

Flat roofs are usually easier to repair or replace than pitched roofs, and the roofing options are more limited. Many houses in Arizona have both flat sections as well as pitched areas.

1 | Foam: Foam covering has become increasingly popular because it provides the best protection for flat roofs and is easy to work with. It covers a roof completely with no seams or joints to split open and create leaks. But birds can peck holes in the foam that will lead to leaks and water damage.

Foam costs about 10 percent or more than what is called built-up roofing (and that doesn't include what it costs to tear off an old roof). It insulates your home so your energy bills can be lower; it's lightweight and can almost last forever with proper maintenance. Its light color reflects the sun. One disadvantage: It must be inspected every five to seven years to ensure that the elastomeric covering on top is not wearing thin. That covering has to be redone regularly so that the foam does not get "sunburned." If a foam roof has sun damage, you could need a complete foam replacement.



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2 | Built-up roofs: This less-expensive style of flat roofing features membrane sheets with sealing on seams as well as around vents, pipes and other penetrations sticking up from the roof. Sometimes it's called a modified bitumen roof. Basically, it's rolled asphalt with heat applied to make it stick to the roof. It can be covered with elastomeric material and generally needs replacing every 15 to 20 years.

3 | PVC: PVC stands for polyvinyl chloride. It is used to make flexible plastic sheets that are heat-welded together on your roof. This single-ply roofing, sometimes sold under the brand names Dura-Last or IB, can cost at least 20 to 30 percent more than foam and takes a week to install. It is longer lasting than foam and comes in tan or light colors; it resists heat and is very energy efficient. It is installed on a roof over rigid boards of insulation material. Some estimates are that a PVC roof will last 30 years. It does not need regular recoating.

Pitched Roofs:

When a pitched roof is covered with clay or concrete tile, it can be difficult to determine what shape your roof is in without an inspection. That's because the tiles are not really the actual roof; it's the underlayment of felt under the tiles that keeps out the rain. To check the underlayment, a roofing company will inspect the valleys on your roof or areas near the chimney and pull up a few tiles. Although many types of tiles can last 20-30 years or more, the underlayment may need to be replaced before then.

Many homeowners may not like the roofing that they have but making a major change can involve obstacles. In a subdivision where all homeowners have the same roofing, HOA rules may forbid a change in style.

1 | Clay Tile: Several kinds of clay tiles are marketed in Arizona, including sandcast, two-piece, interlocking and flat. Sandcast is a matte-finished, rustic-looking tile popular for use on high-end homes, for example. Two-piece tile is similar but stronger. Remember that clay tile will last longer if the underlayment is high quality. The best roofers recommend an underlayment of two layers of 40 pound felt as well as modified bitumen roofing in valleys. Another high-quality choice is G-40, a rolled bitumen material, for the entire roof.

In any case, you will probably have to replace your underlayment before you replace the tiles. How would that be done? Generally, if tiles are in good shape, your contractor can remove them and put them back after replacing the underlayment. Roofers call this an R and R for "remove and replace."



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One possible glitch: If some tiles are broken and can't be reused, you may have trouble finding replacement matches. In part that's because over the past few years, many clay tile companies went out of business in Arizona. If you have to replace missing tiles with a slightly different color, however, a roofer can install them in spots where they are not easily visible.

Although clay tiles are long lasting, they can break and crack, as happened in a massive hailstorm a decade ago. They can also shatter if someone walks on them while doing repairs or from storm debris in a wind storm.

2 | Concrete Tile: Concrete tiles are more durable than clay and can last for dozens of years, local roofers say. But these tiles face the same trouble as clay with underlayment. They also can be removed and replaced. Both clay and concrete are fireproof and resist rot and insects.

3 | Wooden Shakes: Wooden shakes are not common in Arizona, particularly in desert regions. In general, except for important architectural considerations, we do not recommend use of wood shakes on the desert floors of Arizona.

4 | Metal: A newly popular option is metal roofing. The most popular type of metal roofing is the Standing Seam Metal Roof (SSMR). Generally, they are put together like a big puzzle. The clean lines of a standing seam architectural sheet metal can add a dramatic statement to a home. Metal roofs are more expensive than other options however, they rarely need to be replaced and they require little maintenance.

5 | Shingles: Fiberglass shingles can last 20 years or more but have been rising in price. Since these shingles are partly coated with asphalt, an oil refinery byproduct, their cost has gone up due to the cost of oil. Asphalt shingles are lightweight, won't break when you walk on them and carry fire ratings. But shingles can blow off during a storm; they tend to absorb heat and discolor in the hot sun.

When hiring a roofing contractor, just as when you hire anyone to work on your home, be sure that person is licensed, bonded and insured. Get the contractor's state license number and verify his record with the Arizona Registrar of Contractors. Be sure the license is valid and not expired. You can do that by visiting www.azroc.gov on the Internet and clicking on "contractor search." Check expiration dates on your contractor's bond or insurance as well.

All this is especially important now with so many "storm chasers," who came to Arizona after our last hailstorm. You want a roofer who will be here for the long term and will guarantee his work.

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