

Roof Repair After a Hurricane



How do I repair my roof?

Your roof is your home's first line of defense against natural disasters and the most vulnerable part of your home exposed to weather. When a hurricane causes destruction to your roof, dealing with the aftermath can cause distress. The following information will help you through the process of restoring your roof system.

Selecting a roofing contractor

Often following a natural disaster, unprofessional contractors will try to take advantage of unsuspecting homeowners. If it is necessary to hire a roofing contractor, you should keep a healthy skepticism about the lowest bid. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Price is only one criterion for selecting a professional roofing contractor; professionalism and quality workmanship also must be considered. Take some time to evaluate potential contractors before any reroofing work begins.

A professional roofing contractor should have:

- A permanent place of business
- Knowledge of various roof systems
- Proof of insurance and an effective safety program
- Evidence of industry professionalism, such as proof of training, manufacturer certifications, association membership, business account balance statement, etc.
- Continuing industry education
- Financial stability
- A written proposal
- A license and/or be bonded
- Warranties
- References in your state (Proceed with caution if the contractor only provides out-of-state references.)
- A maintenance program

Beware of a contractor:

- Whose references are all out of state
- Who only wants cash
- Who wants money before materials are on site
- Who offers "specials" or "extra-cheap" work

Before making repairs

Unlike interior damage and external damage you can see at eye level, inspecting roof system damage involves climbing a ladder on a potentially unsound, storm-damaged structure. Be sure to proceed with caution, and do not attempt an inspection alone.

- Roofs are designed to resist typical wind loads in their locations, but no roof system can withstand the most extreme winds. Strong winds can incrementally damage a roof system. As wind moves over a roof, its effect is not uniform.
- Depending on the direction the wind blows and the shape and location of the roof, there will be negative pressure (suction) or positive pressure (pushing) similar to the wind slapping your face as you round a corner.
- Most wind damage begins on the edges of roof systems. When roofing material loosens, the wind's suction can raise the material and the wind's pressure can further push the material. Once the roof system's underside is exposed, not only can rain get in, but it also gives the wind more to grab, resulting in a peeling effect. Subsequent winds continue to push roofing material up and over a little more each time until an entire corner of the deck or insulation become exposed. The damage starts small and grows through repeated wind cycles, usually over time.

Before making repairs (continued)

- Other items such as shards of glass, tree branches, etc., can severely damage a roof system as windblown debris is blown across the roof. Inspecting a roof after a hurricane should not only include checking to be sure areas are tight and attachments still are secure, but the roof system assessment should include what might have blown onto or across the roof.
- Do not attempt to climb a ladder and assess roof damage in the dark. Wear sturdy shoes or boots, a long-sleeved shirt and work gloves.
- Windblown debris tends to accumulate and clog drains and downspouts. This can cause problems in the future if the debris is not removed.
- Except in extreme situations, do not attempt roof system repairs. The puncturing of a blister (shingle expansion caused by trapped gases such as air or water vapor) or the spreading of a coating or mastic covers up evidence a roofing contractor needs to ascertain the problem. Roof openings should be temporarily covered with tarpaulins to minimize rain damage.
- For additional information, homeowners can access the Consumer section of the National Roofing Contractors Association's (NRCA's) website at www.nrca.net/consumer. NRCA provides an online listing of its members in its Find a Contractor section.

Be safe

- If you suspect any damage to your home, shut off electrical power, natural gas and propane tanks to avoid fire or explosion in your damaged home.
- If you see frayed wiring or sparks or if there is an odor of something burning, immediately shut off the electrical system at the main circuit breaker and contact the power company.
- If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows and leave the house immediately. Notify the gas company, the police or fire department and do not turn on the lights, light matches, smoke or do anything that could cause a spark.

Insurance

Prepare to file an insurance claim by gathering copies of your homeowner's policy, or track down your policy number(s), and call your insurance company as soon as possible after the hurricane. Your insurer will provide instructions about what to do next.

In a situation where a widespread disaster has occurred, the insurance company may establish special procedures. Keep your receipts for temporary repairs because your insurance company is likely to reimburse you. If your home is uninhabitable, find out whether living expenses will be reimbursed.

Other help

For more information about how to protect your home against hurricanes and high winds, go to www.ready.gov/hurricanes.

Special loans or grants may be available to assist you with repairs. Possible sources include:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
 - www.fema.gov
- American Red Cross
 - www.redcross.org
- Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety®
 - www.disastersafety.org
- Small Business Administration (homeowners might qualify)
 - www.sba.gov
- Local governments
- Private lenders

