

Your HOME

UP ON THE ROOFTOP

As weather warms, inspect your roofing

BY MONICA M. WALK
Special to The Reporter

As the snows melt, homeowners tend to gaze downward at greening lawns and sprouting spring plants.

They also should be looking up to see how their roofs have fared after another rugged winter.

Now is the time to get on roofers' schedules for conferences and estimates. In fact, homeowners who noticed their roofs beginning to fray in the fall may already have many roofers booked well into spring.

Roofing professionals visit residences to view the condition of the roof, offer suggestions on replacement materials, and then



Monica Walk

provide cost estimates for the work to be done.

Roofing season traditionally runs from March through the end of November in this area, according to Joe Forster of Four Star Construction.

"This is the best time to call to talk to contractors about a roof," said Ben Kottke of B. Kottke Construction LLC, noting that homeowners who call later may find themselves waiting two to four months for some busy professionals.

"There is more time to work together. And every spring, shingle prices increase," he said. "It's also better to tackle a problem before it's a major issue



THE REPORTER PHOTOS BY JUSTIN CONNAHER

Kyle Shannon, left, and Scott Muraski of B. Kottke Construction of Fond du Lac roof a house on South Country Lane last week.

and you have to hire the person who can do it tomorrow. Do your homework now."

Roofing options broaden

Most estimates are free, and contractors will give options.

"Get some options and look at what is available," Kottke said. "A roof is half of the house, so you need to be happy with what you see and make sure you like it."

In addition to brochures and samples of materials, Forster provides potential clients with addresses of homes where the installed product can be viewed in full.

Choices for roofing materials have broadened immensely in recent years, and may take more research, review and con-

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sideration than homeowners expect. Shelter magazines and websites, and even leisurely drives through the area, illustrate the variety of choices in materials and colors now possible for homeowners planning a roof installation.

According to the National Roofing Contractors Association, materials available for residential roofing include: asphalt shingles, which can be reinforced with organic (wood-based) or fiberglass materials; wood shingles and shakes; clay or concrete tile; metal, in

panels and shingles; and synthetic products, some recycled, that simulate other traditional roofing products.

Metal making headway

Locally, asphalt shingles remain the top choice in roofing materials. But, Fond du Lac area roofing professionals say they are bidding and installing a growing number of metal roofs.

Bob Goebel of Goebel Roofing and Siding Inc. may be leading the area's growing metal roofing trend. Eleven years ago, he purchased a machine that creates on-site the exact lengths of metal needed for standing-seam roofing jobs, which can be 40 feet long.

He still owns the only machine of this type in

the area, which eliminates the waste of factory orders, the creation of additional seams and the possibility of products being damaged in shipping.

"People either love the look or hate it—there's no in-between," Goebel said of metal roofing. He acknowledged that the labor required for standing-seam installation (in which fasteners and a locking system are hidden and seams folded 180 degrees) along with the cost of the materials can eliminate the interest of some homeowners.

He estimates that an asphalt shingle roof costs about \$250 to \$275 per square foot, while a standing seam roof costs \$575 to \$650 per square foot.

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Know the signs of roof deterioration

Special to The Reporter

For those who put roofs on their homes 20 or 25 years ago, they should realize that the life expectancy of those roofs is about up and it's time to begin planning for a new roof.

But if previous owners put the current roof on your home and you don't know its age, these signs can help you determine if your roof is nearing its demise.

Watch for:

- Ice dams—melting snow that refreezes on a roof's overhang and can back up under shingles—leading to interior leaks, especially where walls and ceilings meet.

- Granules in gutters, showing that the shingles are deteriorating.

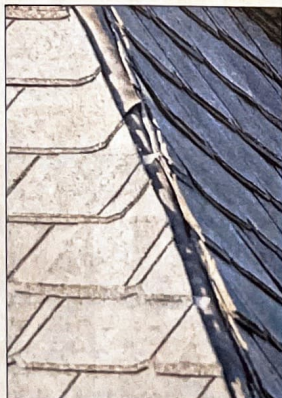
- Loose or missing shingles.

- Other interior stains on ceilings or walls, indicating deterioration of the roof deck or flashing around chimneys, vents and roof joints.

- Damage from rubbing or falling trees.

- Moss and algae, which hold moisture and add to rot.

- An overall impression that the roof is not looking good.



Roof detail of a house on Country Lane.

(Sources: National Roofing Contractors Association, B. Kottke Construction LLC, Four-Star Construction.)

Nail down insurance coverage before hiring roofer

BY MONICA M. WALK
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Choosing a roofer should focus on more than comparing cost estimates for the job, according to local roofing contractors.

"The biggest thing is for homeowners to check references," said Ben Kottke of B. Kottke Construction LLC. "Check insurance and have proof of workman's compensation and liability."

"Ask for proof of insurance," stressed Joe Forster of Four-Star Construction, "even if you have to talk to the insurance agent. The company chosen should be fully insured."

Consumer information on the website for the National Roofing Contractors Association urges homeowners to insist on seeing copies of a contractor's liability coverage and workers' compensation certificates.

The NRCA site notes that compensation laws vary by state and homeowners should educate themselves about state laws to determine that coverage is in compliance, and is in effect for the duration of a job.

When a contractor doesn't carry such insurance, a homeowner can be held liable for injuries that hap-

pen on the home site.

In addition to asking friends and neighbors for referrals of contractors, also ask the contractors for the names of past clients.

Talking with homeowners from completed jobs can underscore satisfaction or raise red flags about a company.

Checking with The Better Business Bureau (<http://wisconsin.bbb.org/>) can be another good way to learn more about a business.

The BBB records complaints lodged against companies, and provides ratings of companies on a scale of A+ to F.

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Traditionally available in a "farmhouse" galvanized finish, standing-seam roofing now is made from steel and is available in an array of colors, including finishes like Copper Penny, Regal Red and Burnished Slate.

A reflective coating on all the colors in 24-gauge weight steel means better heating and cooling bills, and Energy Star ratings.

Asphalt reigns locally

Yet even with metal specialization, Goebel estimates his 31-year-old family business, now co-owned with nephew Pat Goebel, still performs asphalt shingle roofing about 80 percent of the time.

Cost and product familiarity drive those consumer decisions, although the cost of asphalt shingles has risen significantly in recent years, in sync with rising gas costs.

And while a traditional-looking black asphalt shingle is still available, it's likely to be much different from the shingle

last installed on your roof—as color and material choices have changed dramatically.

Originally made from organic materials—with a cellulose or wood base—shingles today most often are made from fiberglass and then coated with asphalt and granulated stone.

Rather than the old "three tab" style, asphalt shingles today generally are of the "dimensional" or "architectural" style.

"Dimensional shingles mimic the cedar shake look," explained Forster, "and are more durable."

Dimensional shingles come in varied price categories based on weight and other features, including color options and Energy Star ratings.

Only four asphalt colors are Energy Star-rated and are more expensive than other varieties, Kottke reported.

The most popular asphalt shingle color in Fond du Lac is named "Weathered Wood," both Forster and Kottke report. A combination of grays and browns, it works well with earth-toned siding.

"In a new subdivision, three of four houses are

this color," Forster said.

Many styles and better warranties make asphalt shingles attractive, said Kottke, who has also seen increased interest in metal options.

"With different architectural styles, like Victorian, we can do a lot of beautiful things with asphalt shingles. Our niche is doing this," Kottke said of his 11-year-old business. "We get excited about the challenge and craftsmanship."

"Price-point and warranty-wise, you can't beat asphalt," Forster concurred, noting that quality ice and water guard underlayments are essential roofing components in Fond du Lac's climate.

From rooftop to cleanup

While the length of a roofing job depends on house size and weather, an average ranch-style home can be reroofed in a day.

Landscaping and its protection can also influence roofing time. Generally, scaffolding is set up to keep debris from reaching the ground, and plants are protected by boards leaned against the home. "Our company policy is

that if we wreck landscaping, we replace it," said Forster, of his 10-year-old business.

A tear-down of multiple roofing layers means considerable debris.

"We try to keep it on the roof and go up with a Sky-Trak with a bucket and shovel it in," Goebel said.

Kottke has invested in an Equipter Roofers Buggy for cleanup.

"It's a self-propelled trailer with wide tires that doesn't chew up the yard," he explained.

Hydraulics lift the device up and over bushes to the roof and then over to a Dumpster by the road.

Tarps, wheelbarrows, debris trailers, garden rakes, shovels and a variety of magnets are tools used to ensure clients are left with clean and safe lawns, along with the comfort of a sturdy new roof.

Freelance writer Monica M. Walk was raised in a Wisconsin family dedicated to the building trades. Grateful for the recent thaw, she wishes she had known how roof rakes can prevent ice dams. Have a home topic you'd like covered? E-mail walkthetalkcommunications@gmail.com