

You may have the notion that when you buy a 30-year shingle you are covered for 30 years. If you experience a roof leak, say 24 years from the date of installation, you can call the shingle manufacturer, and someone will re-roof your building at no cost to you. Unfortunately, that's not even close to reality.

Shingle manufacturers tout product warranties that range from 25 to 50 years. They use impressive-sounding long-term warranties to convince buyers that their shingles are the best and will last the longest. They compete over such features as the length of coverage, algae resistance, wind tolerance, and whether the warranty can be transferred to a new owner. Since warranties are foremost a marketing device, they are more or less of a predictor of lifespan – others would argue otherwise.

Many roofing companies will only offer their customers a 30-year limited material warranty *through the manufacturer*.

What does this include then?

The typical shingle warranty covers materials and labor to replace shingles that are proven to have significant *manufacturing* defects within 5 years from manufacture or installation for a 30-year shingle (10 years for a lifetime shingle). After the 5 years the cost of labor is excluded, and the cost of shingle material is pro-rated (decreases in percentage) based on the expected life of the shingle.

Tear off, disposal, replacement of flashing and other components are typically excluded, as are shingle replacement in cases where installation was not completed in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations or where ventilation is not adequate. Another notable exclusion is that warranties do not cover damage to your interior and belongings.

So what do I look for in a roof warranty?

A good roofer and certified shingles. A credible roofer will give you a good *workmanship* warranty and will be around to honor it. Properly certified shingles are lab tested to perform.

- 01 **ASTM D 3462 certification** – to be certified to these standards, the shingle products must have successfully withstood procedures such as nail withdrawing and tear strength tests.
- 02 **UL certification** – means the shingle has been tested against wind and hail impact. Check for the ASTM and UL labels on shingle packaging and in product brochures.
- 03 Newer shingles also come with **zinc or copper coatings**, which considerably reduces the problem of algae and staining to help maintain a shingle's good looks.

Manufacturer's Defect vs. Roofer Error

Shingles found to have a manufacturer's defect are credited in a warranty. However,

this occurrence that is so rare, your local roof supplier likely hasn't ever seen it if you ask them. Even if you are one of the rare ones, getting reimbursed for a dozen bad shingles won't help much with the cost of repairing your roof. Other materials are needed, roof components and labor being the largest expense. Don't forget that the spaces around and between the shingles (the most leak prone areas) are not usually covered by a shingle warranty.

The Warranty Process

The claim process itself is a barrier to a successful shingle warranty claim. Each company has a different procedure. Some require a daunting task list, completed questionnaires, photographs, and a sample of the damaged shingles. Unless the warranty covers labor as well as materials, the money or shingle credits you receive from the company may not even cover the cost of paying someone to climb up on your roof to take photos and gather samples of your defective shingles.

Identifying Defective Shingles

An untrained eye can spot the most common manufacturing defect. First off, your roof will not look pristine for very long. It doesn't always mean you have bad shingles, but something beyond reasonable should raise red flags. If your shingles are blistering, splitting or cracking, balding (granules coming off completely)- they may be defective. Discoloration may be caused by algae growth. Not all shingles are guaranteed not to grow algae, so check your documentation to find out if your shingles are supposed to be algae-resistant.

Transferring Roof Warranty to a New Owner

If you bought the home after the roof was installed, you need to determine whether the original warranty was transferable. If the material warranty card was filled upon installation, you will need to make proper updates, as you are the new homeowners. Shingle warranties are more likely to be transferable than *roofer guarantees*, but some reputable contractors will give you a *written warranty* that will also be transferable. At the very least, when buying a house with a newer roof, you should ask the seller for the name of the roofer who did the installation, the type of shingles used, and the date of installation. When you are shopping around for a roofer, compare warranty terms and *not* just prices. A transferable roof guarantee may also make the deal a little better to a potential homebuyer.

To Sum it up...

A reputable roofing company with a *track record* is your best warranty. A roofer worth his salt will explain clearly what you're getting – a written workmanship warranty and a shingle warranty card should both be issued. Make sure you know your product being installed is properly certified, and know your roofer installing it will be around next year to stand behind their warranty.