



## Is Your Roof Healthy?

By Rick Bunzel, Mountain View Property Inspection

One of the first questions home inspectors get asked is “how is the roof?” In Northern Colorado, this is especially significant because of the severe weather we have on occasion. Home inspectors use two common techniques to evaluate the serviceability of the roof; looking at the condition of the exterior materials such as shingles and flashing and then looking at the underside of the roof for any evidence of leaks. The latter is more difficult especially in older home that may have had multiple roofs over there life. However, it always boils down to the simple question, does this roof leak now?

Unfortunately, the answer is not always a simple yes or no. This is due to the fact that home inspectors cannot always do the inspection when the weather is appropriate to spot the leak. In fact, it is rare that an inspector will get to see an active roof leak. If the roof is old and many of the shingles have cracks or are damaged it is easy to justify the condition and probability of leaks in the near future. However most of the time we will have to depend on subtle signs to determine if the leaks are currently active such as staining on the ceiling or moist insulation in the attic. This is where the experience of the home inspector will benefit you most.

Here are some of the things we look at:

- Roof surface -- The roof materials should form an even flat surface. Defects resulting from improperly installed shingles, popped nails, shrinkage of caulking, missing shingles, cracks, and tears can allow moisture to penetrate the roof long before that moisture will show up on the inside
- Moisture -- A soft or spongy surface area is usually a sign of trapped moisture, indicating damaged sheeting.
- Flashing -- The sheet metal on your roof should be uniform in appearance and firmly attached. Flashing should be stepped to allow water to flow down and stay on top of the roofing material. Problems with the flashing will only be exaggerated with high winds and will result in water seepage under the shingles. Neoprene boots are used are vents. These are examined for cracks or tears.
- Drainage -- In addition to clearing debris from drains and gutters, look for standing water on the roof surface
- On the inside we will look for stains or moisture that would indicate water leakage. In cases where the leaks have occurred over time the rafters or joists may be damaged.

I usually examine a roof by walking on it and look for problem areas. However, in many cases where there are steep roofs, slick surfaces such as metal or tile, or weather conditions (rain or snow) I will examine the roof from the ladder or with binoculars. As I see conditions that warrant attention, I will document them with digital photography and present those to my client as part of my home inspection report.

If you happen to find yourself with a roof leak there are several things you can do to speed of the repair. Your first step, is to identify the source of the problem on the ceiling or the roof of your attic, if you have one and you feel safe going up there. It's best to take a flashlight in order to pinpoint the exact spot of the leak. Mark the spot with a pen or marker, and place a large pot or bucket underneath it until the professionals arrive. If the leak is showing in the ceiling and its starting to sag from the water, put a small hole in the lowest point to allow the water to drain. If you've got an attic leak, and your attic consists of a vaulted ceiling and beams with no floor, place a board on top of the beams underneath the leak, and place your pot/bucket on top of the board. Then call a professional to seal up the leak. In many cases this will require a ladder and if you don't feel safe going on it, leave the work to the professionals.

Rick Bunzel is the Principle Inspector at Mountain View Property Inspections. If you would like to know more about the systems within your home go to **[WWW.MVPinspection.com](http://WWW.MVPinspection.com)** If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Mountain View Property Inspections @ 303-443-9063 or [MVPInspection@attbi.com](mailto:MVPInspection@attbi.com)