

HOMEOWNER ALERT!



Dear Homeowner, Your Roofer Has Something to Tell You

There's a reason attic ventilation is part of your roof estimate

Buying a new roof is expensive whether it's out of pocket or through an insurance claim. Thousands of dollars go into the installation of the roof on your house that provides much more than just curbside appeal. Your roof is the first line of protection from Mother Nature's wind, rain, snow, hail; year-round. Evaluating the submitted roofing estimates, making a final selection and then working with the hired roofing contractor can become a bit overwhelming, especially since roof purchases usually only happen a few times in your lifetime. Few have a lot of practice with the process.

We asked roofing contractors who attend our best practices in residential attic ventilation seminars to *share a message they wish they could relay to homeowners **PRIOR** to their arrival to inspect your roof and attic.* Doing so would perhaps simplify the roof purchase for everyone – you and them.

It's Not a Scam or Fake News

While it may not seem obvious, a properly installed roof needs attic ventilation. Attic ventilation is a system of intake vents (placed in the eaves/soffit or low on the roof) and exhaust vents (placed at or near the roof peak). Together, they help fight heat buildup in the warmer months, moisture buildup in the colder months, and ice dams in snow regions.

Quality-conscious roofing contractors discuss this with you during the estimating process of your new roof. They evaluate your current attic ventilation and talk to you about any needed improvements. It's not a scam. It's not a strategy to artificially inflate the cost of the project. It's genuinely needed.

In our poll of residential roofing contractors across North America, 77% of the homes today have improper attic ventilation, including not enough or incorrect ventilation. It only makes sense, then, that the roofing contractor brings it up during the estimating process for your new roof. If the contractor doesn't, that should be a red flag to you.

"I want the homeowner to understand the need and purpose of a properly designed attic ventilation system," says **Matt Cooper**, general manager, **Redemption Roofing**, Conroe, TX. "The moisture we're generating as occupants of the house in the winter needs to be vented. It will help extend the service life of the shingles."



You Generate Gallons of Moisture Daily

The moisture Cooper is referring to is 2-4 gallons of water vapor generated daily by the average family of four through cooking, cleaning, showering, breathing, and perspiration. In the colder months that moisture seeks a cooler, dryer place – your attic. If it's not vented properly out of the attic it could condense as frost or water droplets and drip onto your attic insulation (reducing its effectiveness). In time, mold, mildew and poor indoor air quality can result.

In cold climates, attic ventilation is also part of a multi-step fight against ice dams (along with attic insulation and water-protective underlayment underneath shingles). When snow accumulates on the roof it's important for it to melt as evenly as possible. That can happen if the roof deck temperature is as even as possible. And that only happens if the attic has a balanced flow of air from low (eaves/soffits) to high (at or near the peak) flushing out any heat buildup from inside the attic. Otherwise, the roof can develop hot and cold spots. That causes the snow to melt where it's warmest (high on the roof) and then potentially refreeze when it reaches colder spots (low on the roof). Any additional snow melt that runs down the roof into the refrozen area hits the "ice dam" and can back up under the shingles. From there the water can cause problems to the roof deck, the attic and the interior of the house.

In the warmer months, heat is the concern. As the sun bakes on the roof, the heat radiates into the attic. If it's not properly vented out of the attic, it transfers into the living space. That increases the burden on the air conditioning system, any indoor cooling fans and the refrigerator. That increases your utility bills. Meanwhile, up on the roof, your brand-new shingles are exposed to elevated temperatures that could reduce their service life. Research has shown that shingles on unvented attics can experience as much as a 10% service life reduction.

Energy Savings Await

When roofing contractors suggest ways to improve your attic ventilation during the roofing estimate they're considering the potential energy savings you'll enjoy.

"I want homeowners to know they'll get the maximum longevity from their new roof by having the attic properly ventilated," says **Corey Ballweg**, owner, **Mid Towne Construction**, Cross Plains, WI. "They'll also benefit from the energy savings associated with proper air movement in their attic."

Frequently, roofing contractors say, homeowners fail to grasp that the "system" is providing a financial payback. "Attic ventilation gives you a return on investment better than any other 'system' within the roof assembly. Lower electricity costs and extended roof life," says **Chris Arrington**, vice president, **Arrington Roofing**, Dallas, TX.

"Think of attic ventilation as a prescription for 'Good Home Health,'" says **Jeff Barnett**, vice president, **Barnett Roofing & Siding, Inc.**, Canton, MI. "With proper ventilation the home

will breathe easier with less potential for mold and premature aging and failure of the roof system. Not to mention the reduced costs of operating the heating and cooling system."

"I try to preach the benefits of an updated attic ventilation system: comfort, reduced cycling on big ticket items – like the HVAC system, furnace, swamp cooler, etc. – lower utility bills, longer shingle lifespan and maintaining the full terms of the shingle warranty," says **Clayton Putman**, owner, **Colorado Roofing Solutions**, Aurora, CO. "My biggest selling

point is comfort and reduced HVAC usage."

Let's look at the shingle warranty Putman mentions.

Shingle Warranty Reduction

The full terms of the warranty for your new roof that costs thousands of dollars are tied directly to proper, balanced attic ventilation. It's spelled out in the shingle warranty. Balanced attic ventilation includes intake vents and exhaust vents. Not one or the other, but both. The official representing organization of asphalt shingle manufacturers, ARMA, says point black in its technical bulletin for residential roofing: the roof needs balanced attic ventilation. Therefore, conscientious roofing contractors talk about attic ventilation when estimating your new roof. They do not want to put their name on an inferior finished product, and you should not be willing to pay for it, either.

Your homeowner's insurance policy might have "code upgrade" language that requires your new roof to meet current building code standards, including attic ventilation. If your insurance company is unwilling to pay for any needed attic ventilation improvements called out by your roofing contractor, you should remind your insurance company about the policy language. Many roofing contractors tell us they will help you by writing a letter on your behalf to the insurance company explaining the deficiencies with the existing attic ventilation. Your insurance company should be concerned paying for a new roof that is not up to code and likely will experience a shorter lifespan.

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– Chris Arrington

Compare Estimates with Care

It's wise for you to compare roofing estimates. It's foolish not to. It's too large of a purchase to not be thorough when you're buying a roof. Roofing contractors expect you to review and compare their estimates. What they do not understand, they tell us, is the comparison that's primarily based on price differences without understanding the scope of work differences. Not all roofing estimates are the same. To dismiss an estimate that is several thousand dollars more expensive than another without understanding why is not only unfair to contractors, but it puts your roof at risk.

"Please make sure you're not just buying a roof. You need to buy a total system to prolong the life of your new roof, as well as other elements of your home," says **Sabrina Johnson**, president, **KDCO Home Improvement Inc.**, Akron, OH. That "system" Johnson is referring to includes proper attic ventilation. And including attic ventilation in the roof estimate is naturally going to involve cost – a cost that is a small fraction of the overall expense of the roof itself. Small in dollars but large in importance.

No one wants to pay more for something unnecessarily. But is less expensive better?

"Homeowners question my reasoning for additional attic ventilation since most other contractors do not mention the need. The homeowners almost feel as if I am trying to take advantage of them rather than make their roof 'system' a best practices/optimal operating one," says Johnson.

The roofing contractors who take the time to become familiar with the research that supports the benefits of attic ventilation relay it to you. But some homeowners balk and reject the need. This frustrates some roofing contractors.

"My message to homeowners is that many years of study has gone into learning about attic ventilation. We are trying to give homeowners the best possible roof system. This includes a lot more than just the roof covering they will see, but all the components that make a roof last," says **Richard Turner**, owner, **R. J. Turner Remodeling, LLC.**, Winston Salem, NC.

"I explain to homeowners that the manufacturer of the attic vents has done the research and testing, and this is absolutely necessary for the health of the entire home," says **Patrick Readyhough**, president, **Pond Roofing Company, Inc.**, Fairfax, VA.

"Here's a saying I use with my customers: 'Air tight isn't necessarily air right,'" says **Dale Johnson**, general manager, **Rock Solid Exteriors**, Mount Clemens, MI. "What I mean when I say this, is that because the living areas of homes are being designed or upgraded to be more air tight, it has a huge impact on the attic area as well as the roof system."

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– Sabrina Johnson

5 Things Homeowners Should Know About Attic Ventilation

1. To perform properly, attic ventilation must be a balanced system of INTAKE vents (at the eaves/soffit or low on the roof) and EXHAUST vents (at or near the peak of the roof). 50% INTAKE and 50% EXHAUST.
2. EXHAUST vents without proper INTAKE vents are not only useless, they are potentially problematic (possibly causing weather infiltration).
3. Someone should check inside your attic to make sure the insulation is not blocking/covering the intake vents from allowing incoming airflow (ask the roofing contractor or do it yourself).
4. Never mix two different types of attic EXHAUST vents on the same roof above a common attic (wind turbines, roof-top louvers/box vents, gable-end louvers, ridge vents or power fans). Doing so can short-circuit the system which can lead to inefficient airflow and weather infiltration.
5. Just because you never had proper attic ventilation before does not mean it's unnecessary now. If you've done any improvements to your windows, doors or insulation over the years, the house is more airtight and will benefit from attic ventilation.

Price Should Not be the Bottom Line

When comparing prices between submitted roofing estimates, be sure to compare the attic ventilation details. Does the estimate include intake vents and exhaust vents? Has the size of your attic (based on attic square footage) been factored into the quantity of vents needed? Has the geometry of your roof and its steepness been factored into the type of vents recommended? Remember, you're buying much more than just a roof covering.

"Attic ventilation is the most important part of a roof system. Don't worry so much about the price. Worry about who's going to do the best work for your home," says **Sandra Daffer**, owner, **Hawaiian Built Roofing Inc.**, Boise, ID.

For **Ron Bastian**, estimate comparing by homeowners comes down to this: "We have been in business for 50 years doing our projects to their fullest each and every time. Attic ventilation is a must," says the owner of **Bastian Roofing**, Richfield, WI. He wants homeowners to know he stands behind his craft, expertise and price.

Nevertheless, some homeowners will ask: "*But why are you the only roofing contractor who discusses attic ventilation?*" To which **Bryan Epley** responds, "Because only true roofing experts look at both the intake and exhaust ventilation when evaluating a roof system." The senior director of business development and sales, **Gen 3 Roofing**, Centennial, CO, fully understands that to perform at its best, attic ventilation must be a balanced system of intake vents (in the soffit/overhang or low on the roof) and exhaust vents (at or near the roof peak).

"Proper ventilation of your attic has a tight hold on the climate control and longevity of your roof system. You need to have someone well versed in the ventilation expertise to properly address your home's intake and exhaust airflow as best they can with what they have to work with on any given project," says **Sean Jegen**, owner, **Gorilla Exterior Contracting, LLC.**, Shawnee, KS.

To the doubting homeowner, **Christy Cummings**, vice president, **Cummings Roofing, Inc.**, Klamath Falls, OR, points out, "Our company has been trained in best practices and proper

installation methods of products that come with warranties." Cummings drove 5 hours ONE WAY to attend our two-hour best practices seminar.

"That's what **Jeff Heitzenrater** wants homeowners to know, too – his company brings continuing education to the doorstep of each project. "Every chance we get we attend best practices seminars like Air Vent's," says the president of operations, **Triple Peaks Roofing and Construction, Inc.**, Olmsted Falls, OH. "Not only learning during these seminars but often taking phone calls from our competition because we firmly believe Givers Gain. The more we 'give' to our industry the more we 'gain' in knowledge. We're bringing that knowledge to the homeowner."

Roofers Will Reject Your Roof

Not every homeowner accepts the information presented by the roofing contractor. Some will decline the need to include or improve the attic ventilation in the project but still want the contractor to install the new roof. That's not going to happen with roofing contractors who pride themselves in only doing it right.

"If you want it done wrong, call someone else," says **Trevor Atwell**, owner, **Atwell Exterior Services LLC**, Greenville, NC. Atwell is very willing to walk away from the project if the homeowner will not allow him to install it correctly.

"Our company will not do a roof without making sure it's vented correctly," says Heitzenrater.

"We always do it right or we don't do it," says Arrington.

Dear Homeowner, one parting message: "Please clean out your closet or move the items so we can access the attic and do an inspection," requests **Sue McCollum May**, owner, **A Better Way Construction and Roofing LLC**, Lincoln, NE.

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– Bryan Epley

Paul Scelsi is marketing communications manager at Air Vent Inc., and leader of its Attic Ventilation: Ask the Expert™ seminars. He's also chairman of the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association Ventilation Task Force. For more information, visit airvent.com.



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