

Maintaining a Metal Roof

Proper metal roofing maintenance includes twice a year (spring and fall) inspections and after severe storms to check for accumulation of debris or distress conditions. Typical distress conditions include movement of panels or fasteners, sealant failures, fastener gasket deterioration, and damage from snow, ice or hail. Most sealants do not last more than 20 years. Flatter-sloped roofs or roofs with long valleys can require more regular inspections as they are more likely to accumulate leaves and debris.

If you are uncertain about your safety as you consider a roof inspection with proper safety equipment, you should contact a roofing professional to perform the inspection. Not all roof slopes are safe for walking, so first confirm that the surface is clean enough for good shoe adhesion and take a few test steps before venturing out. Have a plan for safe entry and exit from the roof. That plan needs to minimize foot traffic as this can certainly damage the roof. Always walk on the flat panel areas where there are roof supports such as joists or purlins. Never walk on rake or eave flashings and hip or ridge flashings.

Clean downspouts, gutters, and drain boxes. Pooling moisture areas from dirt piles or rotted debris can eat through the roof and allow plant growth that can ruin the roof. Remove or prune any tree branches or other elements touching the roof for a clearance of six feet. They can cause abrasion damage to the finish and over time could cause a roof leak. Utilizing an extendable, soft-bristle brush is the preferred cleaning tool. Avoid strong water streams that can force leaks at joints and seams. You can gently wash your roof with one of the following solutions:

1. One cup of detergent containing less than 0.5% phosphate mixed with five gallons of water.
2. Cleaners that contain mild solvents like Formula 409, Fantastic, or Star Brite Instant Black Streak Remover.
3. Use one cup of household bleach and one cup of mild dish soap mixed with five gallons of water for mildew or fungal growth.

Check roof penetrations for leaks at heating or air vents and skylights. If there is a crack or suspected metal-gap problem area, fill it with a high-quality metal roofing sealant that is permanently flexible and will not crack like butyl sealant. Inspect areas around chimneys, heating system vents, cooking area exhaust vents and air conditioners. These components can expose your metal roof to chemicals that can break down the finish and corrode the

metal. Look for loose flashings, damaged roof sheets, and loose or damaged fasteners as well as punctures from falling objects. If the roofing finish has large scratches, cover the area with manufacturer approved bottle-brush touch-up paint.

A related consideration concerns painting of wall surfaces near a metal roof. The preferred paint application method is the use of brush and rollers. Spraying walls or eaves to save time often leads to wind-blown overspray that accumulates on the roofing surface as a permanent and impossible-to-remove scar to the roof finish.

You may want to consider using a drone as an inspection option.

Related Links:

National Roofing Contractor Assoc.:

<https://www.nrca.net>

Sheet Metal & Air Conditioning Contractors National Assoc.:

<https://www.smacna.org>

Contact LCEF to find an Architectural Advisory Committee member near you for additional information.



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