

What's Up With That Roof?

A STUBBORN CANADIAN COLD FRONT PARKED over the Midwest recently has been creating an incubator of quick moving thunder boomers and Biblically-proportioned rains. During the past two years,

Chicago-land roofs have been put to the test with heavy snow, and sudden deluges of water that fill gutters and obliterate sump pumps.

YOU MIGHT HAVE SEEN A DAMP SPOT on the ceiling, a few wood shakes on the drive, or found yourself running to find every bucket in the house to capture the leaking water that just rinsed off your Steinway. It might be a good time to think about your roof, because the rains will keep coming and snow will fall again. Roofs are not maintenance free, though we wish they were. Some are lower-maintenance than others, but there is still work to be done.

Asphalt roofs are the ones that most think are maintenance-free. If you have trees, then you've got little piles of leaves and sticks that make dams on your roof. These piles must be removed regularly from behind vent stacks and skylights as they slow the flow of water, which finds its way into sky-lights and chimney flashings. This also creates nurseries for mold and unwanted crawly creatures.

Chimney flashings should be recaulked at least every two years. And, as long as you are up on the roof developing a relationship with your chimney, check to see if the mortar between the stones is looking shallow. If it's more than a quarter inch deep, you probably need tuck-pointing. Ninety percent of ice-dams are caused by clogged gutters and down spouts, so get them cleaned out every year.

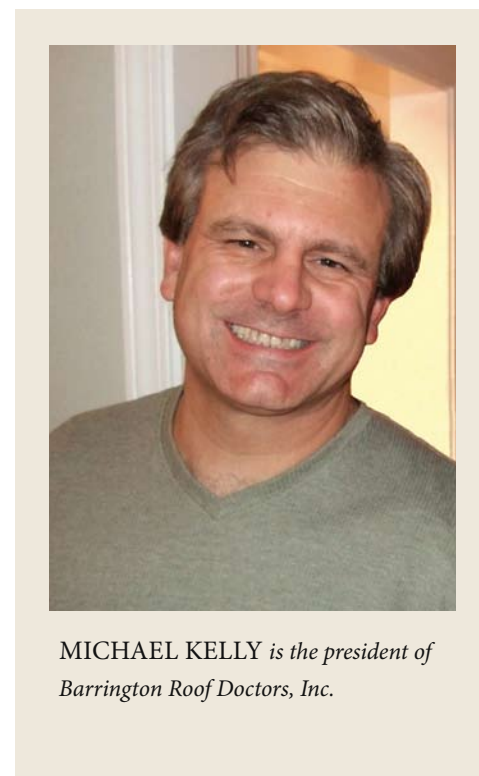
The minute you install an asphalt roof, the tiny granules start to wear and come off, especially if the cable-guy frequents your roof. There are some new products coming to the market that can be sprayed directly on the shingles to give them an

extra seal coating. It is too soon to know the effectiveness of these products, but look for more info on them to become available.

Cedar roofs, which are ubiquitous to the Barrington area, are works in progress. Cedar roof owners have a love-hate relationship with their roofs because of their classic look, but they are a constant state of wonder. There is the mold nestled in and growing on the shingles under the trees that overhang the house. There is that stray, mystery shingle that seems to reoccur on the driveway, by the garage or even at the front door. Fear not, because if maintained, the cedar on new roofs can last up to 30 years.

Preserving a cedar roof includes cleaning the roof by removing debris between the shingles with a blower, removing the mold with a pressure washer, replacing curled shingles, and then treating them with a water-based preservative that is available in several attractive colors. This is a proven science and it will save you on inspection day when the buyer's people look it up. Several Barrington area real estate agents let their clients know it is a good idea to have their cedar roof maintenance done before the "for sale" sign goes up.

If you've passed the maintenance deadline, discovered a leak, called a roofing company and been given the dreaded diagnosis – it's time for a new roof – you can find solace in the fact that there are new roofing products out there that provide for 50-year and lifetime limited warranties. Such new products like "DiVinci" (www.divinciroofscapes.com) offer the look of slate, cedar shakes or cedar shingles. They are constructed from synthetic resins, polymers, and are completely recyclable at the end of their term. Other benefits are it's lightweight (most homes aren't structurally built to handle the weight of real slate), powerful UV blockers and high-impact resistance. These products are less expensive than slate and can be comparable in cost to a new cedar shake roof.



MICHAEL KELLY is the president of Barrington Roof Doctors, Inc.

For most people, home repairs are ruled by strict budget constraints, but there are many overlooked affordable asphalt shingle designs and styles on the market. Start by looking at www.roofing.owenscorning.com. Their design center has a fabulous, user-friendly way to see what different colors and styles look like on your house as once you upload a picture of your home and well...start roofing. 