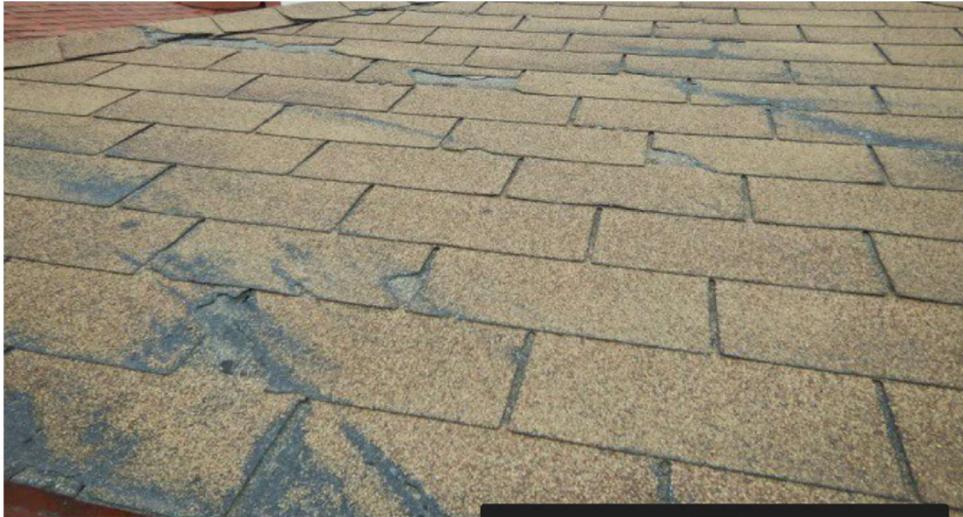


Don't Let a Bad Roof Void Your New Homeowner Policy

In the market for a home? Get a roof assessment before closing or risk losing coverage!

By Tony Sanchez, Farmers Insurance Agent

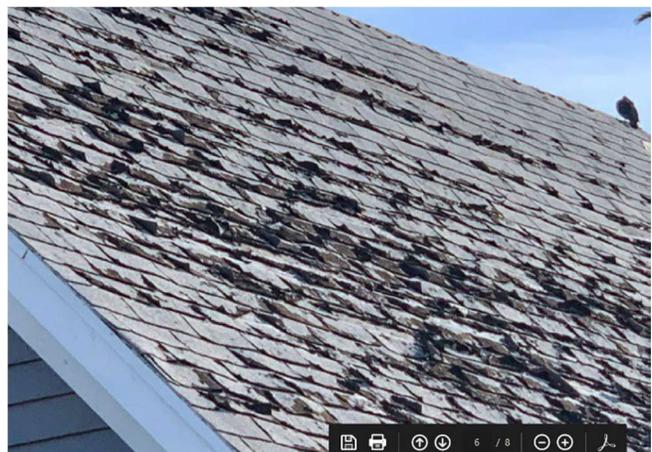


So your offer has been accepted, the inspection went through, and your dream home is finally in escrow. Congratulations!

Wait a minute...not so fast.

Now it's time to secure homeowner's coverage on your soon-to-be new abode. But first, an in-depth inspection by your Farmers Insurance agent and underwriter is vitally important—particularly to evaluate what condition the roof is in. Why? A deteriorating roof can lead to a policy denial or cancellation if it is not replaced within 45 days.

Yes, contrary to popular belief, this may be an issue even AFTER the home has passed its pre-purchase inspection!



Several years ago, a client of mine found himself in exactly that situation when buying a house. The inspector had done a cursory visual examination, then indicated in his report that the asphalt shingle roof was “good for another five years.” The sale went through, escrow closed, and my client's family happily moved in.



After he called me to secure homeowner's insurance, I went out for a site visit and didn't see any obvious issues, either. However, when our expert underwriter performed a thorough, professional inspection, he found that the roof was too old and in poorer condition than everyone else had thought. As a result, coverage on the home was denied—until the new owner replaced the entire roof out of pocket, adding nearly ten thousand more dollars to his purchase price.

He learned a very expensive lesson for next time—to initiate the insurance policy BEFORE completion of the sale and not to depend on only the general home inspection.

Remember, once escrow closes, the expense to replace an aging roof will be 100% on YOU, the homebuyer. When you identify problems before then, it becomes the responsibility of the seller to mitigate any issues—or gives you the option of rescinding your offer based on contingency clauses in the sales contract.

The most common roofing materials in southern California home construction are asphalt shingles (which cost the least), followed by the more durable concrete tiles and adobe clay tiles. Less commonly used are slate, metal, and wood shingles.



While concrete roofs typically last up to 50 years and clay as long as 100 years, asphalt shingles only have a lifespan of 15–20 years. When you consider that the average home in our area sells about every five to seven years you can see how easy it is for aging roofs to slip through the cracks, so to speak.

But given that a shingle roof lasts up to two decades, why would a homebuyer want to settle for an older roof with only a few years of life left? And how can an inspector or underwriter generally tell the condition of a roof?

Due to heat, weather, and age, asphalt shingles tend to shrink over time, creating separation between individual shingles, which normally are placed with their edges flush together. Other easily visible signs of wear to look for include: fallen shingles beneath the eaves, missing or slipping shingles, and curling or lifting corners.



On some older homes, you might even notice three or four layers of shingles placed atop each other, when there should only be one. This indicates past attempts at patching rather than removing and completely replacing the roof.

The bottom line is, the age and condition of a sale home's roof plays a more significant role in its insurability than most people realize. Therefore, once you have made an offer, remember to:

- 1) Evaluate and ensure that the roof has plenty of life remaining.
- 2) Back up the home inspection with an underwriter assessment.
- 3) Don't wait until escrow closes to apply for a homeowner's policy from Tony Sanchez Farmers Insurance.

Happy home-buying! We look forward to insuring your new purchase.