

## Inspector Secrets: Roof Inspections

Home inspectors, as generalists, should identify conditions which may require further evaluation by a specialist. Among these, roofing concerns are paramount. So naturally, when the client or agent notices the inspector does not get on the roof, the quality of the inspection is in question... *or is it?*

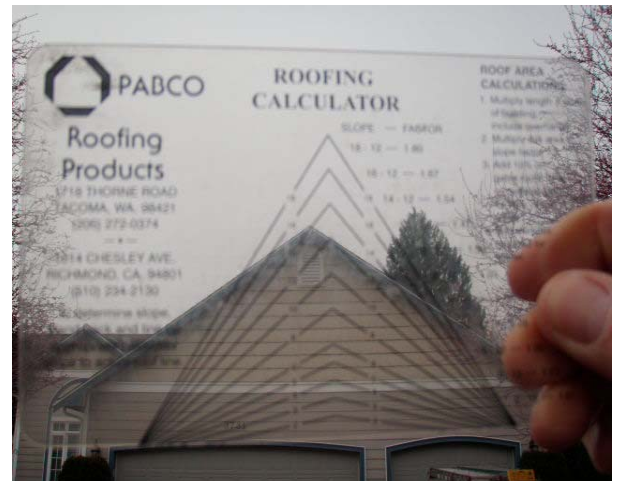
The roof inspection starts long before arriving on site with formal training about the various roof products, how they perform and how they age. With real estate transactions it is generally accepted that anything estimated to have less than 5 years of lifespan should be reported. As an ex-roofing contractor and home inspection instructor, I will usually have a pretty good idea of what condition the roof will be in, sight unseen, just based on the age of the house. An experienced inspector should be able to do the same. Often, it is quite clear when ascending the ladder that the roof needs replacement. At that point, the inspector may elect not to walk the roof simply because doing so will do nothing to change his recommendation for replacement and only expose him to unneeded risk.



Next is understanding that a professional inspection is really a series of deliberate acts where, based on their training and experience, the inspector will look for certain issues until they either find them or become convinced they are not there. In roofing, the key to inspection is to know where the critical areas are and how or why they fail. These critical areas include penetrations and transitions, valleys, flashing details and lastly, the field. Sometimes, issues related to these critical areas can be readily identified without even being on the roof.

At left an obvious roof flashing issue, visible from the sidewalk.

So what might prevent the inspector from getting on the roof? First among these are safety issues such as very tall or steep roofs; with steep generally defined as greater than 6:12 pitch. Second are roofs which could be slippery such as cedar shake and shingle, tile, PVC membrane, metal, or roofs with snow or ice on them. Third are roofs where damage could be caused if the inspector walks on them. These include tile, thin gauge metal and sometimes cedar shake. Lacking the specialty equipment of a roofer and with the time constraints of the inspection, the inspector may be relegated to using resources at hand, such as examining the roof from the ladder, or using binoculars. Regardless, by using their knowledge of roofing and understanding of how and why things fail, a well experienced inspector should still be able to provide a very good assessment of the roof, whether they walk it or not.



Want to know more? Have other inspection questions? Call us at 360.459.1632 or email @ [cameohomeinspection@comcast.net](mailto:cameohomeinspection@comcast.net)



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