

Inspector Secrets - Roof Leaks

Most every home inspection client anxiously awaits the report about the attic to learn if there are any roof leaks. Interestingly, I have never found attics to be the most reliable place to look for leaks. Here is some information to help you understand why: As a past roofing contractor I learned to divide a roof into three parts: First are *Penetrations* such as chimneys, vents and skylights. Second are *Valleys*, those areas where two different roof pitches come together. Third is the *Field*, which is essentially anything that is not a penetration or a valley.

Where Leaks Occur

Based on my experience, roof leaks happen #1 around penetrations, #2 in valleys and #3 in the field. If it is a tile roof, the #1 leak source is in the valley with penetrations being #2. Remember that gravity will pull water downward as far as it can. Therefore the manifestation of a leak may occur where the water gets bottlenecked, often far away from the actual leak source. If you are previewing a home, look around skylights and chimneys for sure. But many times, leaks are manifest along the gutter edge, or above the interior wall on the gutter edge, especially with low pitch roofs such as manufactured homes. That said, a paint sag on an exterior wall, such as shown below, could actually be from a roof leak!



Want to know more? Have other inspection questions?
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