

Clues in the Attic: The Secrets to Winter Roof Maintenance

NewsUSA

(NU) - It's a routine homeowners know they're supposed to perform twice a year. But when one of those times for checking the health of their roof happens to coincide with the start of sharply colder weather – if not worse surprises from Mother Nature – well, who wants to be outside climbing a ladder for a bird's-eye view?

Turns out that while even a quick roof-check is recommended, there's also a fallback position.

You could check your attic instead.

“Roofs create an insulated barrier that helps trap heat inside, and most attic spaces are located right below them,” explains Jason Joplin, program manager of the Center for the Advancement of Roofing Excellence, which is championed by GAF, North America's largest roofing manufacturer. “That makes them perfect for spotting potential problem areas and damage without worrying about falling.”

Bearing in mind the crucial role roofs play in determining a house's energy efficiency – yes, that means utility bills – here's what to look for:

- **Water leaks.** As sure as we haven't heard the last of NSA spying on Americans, it will soon storm. And when it does, shine a flashlight up in the attic in search of not just dripping water and condensation, but also water stains on the ceiling, walls and floor. All are signs that H₂O is finding its way under your roof's shingles or behind its flashings.

- **Animal damage.** Refuge-seeking birds, bats, squirrels and raccoons can cause a world of havoc. Anything suspicious –



Take a look inside your attic.

nests, droppings and gnawed wood, wires or insulation – merits an immediate call to a pest professional.

- **Ventilation.** “Think of the attic as the lungs of the house,” says Joplin. “It has to be able to breathe in order to function properly.” Meaning, if your vents are stuffed with debris, they need to be cleared.

- **Structure.** Any hint of a sagging roof – look up for this one – could signal potential structural weakness requiring professional repair.

What's that? You say you love the cold as much as you do the spring (the recommended time for a second annual roof check-up)? In that case, you can still inspect for structural deformities without risking your neck on a treacherous ladder by using binoculars to zoom in on everything from loose shingles to broken gutters.

And if prolonging your roof's life is truly your goal, experts say it pays to consult a professional roofing contractor who's insured and uses quality materials like GAF's Timberline American Harvest shingles. A free service that makes it easy to find a factory-certified contractor in your area can be found at www.gaf.com.