



# Tile Roof Inspection and Preventative Maintenance

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Tile roofs are beautiful, long-lasting, and durable. However, the service life of a tile roof is directly related to how often it is inspected and how quickly problems are identified and repaired. A regular inspection and preventative maintenance program can increase the service life of a tile roof by 30 to 100 percent.

Tile roofs are not designed to be walked on, but sometimes this cannot be avoided. One of the most common reasons for repairs is excessive foot traffic from inexperienced vendors or occupants, which can break or crack tiles and cause multiple problems. Regular inspections, particularly after people have walked on the roof, can reduce the need for an early and expensive roof replacement.

## Tile Roof Construction

Contrary to popular belief, roof tiles do not protect the structure from moisture intrusion due to rain and wind. The real protective material is under the tiles. This material is a felt membrane called the "underlayment," and is considered the life of the roof. The purpose of the tile is to protect the underlayment from the elements.

During installation, the underlayment is laid out to cover the wood decking of the roof. The tiles are then placed on top of the underlayment. Tiles may be attached to the underlayment and wood decking by various methods, including nailing, screwing, application of foam adhesive, mudding with a mortar mix, or nailing or screwing to battens (strips of wood that go on top of the underlayment).

The underlayment, along with flashing, is used at the connections between roof sections and around chimneys, vents, skylights, valleys, gutters, and vent pipes. Flashing can be manufactured from steel, aluminum, copper, or vinyl.

To correct leaks, all of these layers must be removed and replaced. The tile and underlayment are removed first. Then the leak is repaired and the underlayment and tile are reinstalled.

## Inspection Overview

The purpose of inspections is to look for problems such as excessive moisture (usually leaks), fungus, dry rot, and termite damage. The inspector also looks for broken tiles, damaged or worn felt membrane, and damaged roof vents, stacks, valley, and chimney flashing. Regular inspections can catch these problems early and minimize the damage and repair cost.

## Inspections After Fumigation

All associations with tile-roofed buildings that have experienced a termite fumigation process are especially vulnerable to roofing damage. Roof inspection and maintenance should be scheduled immediately after the fumigation process is complete.

During fumigation, workers walk and drag heavy tarps across tile roofs, invariably causing tiles to move and break. These damaged tiles puncture holes in the felt membrane underlayment. Because of the almost inevitable damage, fumigations can create long term roofing problems if there is no subsequent inspection and repair. In some cases, a fumigation process may void the roof manufacturer's warranty.

## Best Practices

The following steps will help to ensure that a tile roof provides maximum value for the community's investment:

1. Schedule tile roof inspections and repairs at least twice a year, and always immediately after a fumigation process.
2. Keep a detailed, written history of inspections and repairs. This will allow you to more accurately predict roof life expectancy and set a budget for future expenditures.