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Trends in roofing

By Melissa Erickson More Content Now
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President John F. Kennedy once said, “The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining,” meaning, fix a potential problem before it becomes unbearable.

A good roof is essential to keeping a home warm and safe. If you’re in the market for a new roof, considerations include not only budget and beauty, materials and manpower, but energy efficiency, sustainability and longevity, said Todd Miller, president of Isaiah Industries, a national manufacturer of specialty residential metal roofing.

Asphalt shingles are still the lion’s share of the residential roofing market, but studies have shown that metal and polymer-based composite products are gaining popularity, Miller said.

“Metal roofing is particularly known for its energy efficiency. Thanks to reflective coatings and integral thermal breaks (air gaps), metal roofs often reduce summer energy costs by up to 20% and sometimes even more,” he said.

Both metal and polymer-based composite roofs are made of recycled materials and can be fully recycled at the end of their useful life. Interlocking metal panels are wind- and fire-resistant and are low weight for seismic stability, Miller said.

“Violent weather patterns are forcing homeowners to consider things like wind and hail resistance as well as fire safety and energy efficiency when choosing a roof,” he said.

Because metal roofs can run two to three times the cost of asphalt shingles, they are often chosen by homeowners who intend to remain in the home for 10-plus years or put on “legacy homes” that will be passed on to family members, Miller said.

Metal roofs are available in styles ranging from traditional standing seam to products that mimic shingles, wood shakes, slate or tile. Many composite products also mimic wood shake and slate.

“A trend we have noted is toward cleaner, crisper roofing material lines rather than random, chunky looks,” Miller said. “These simpler products look very distinctive without being overwhelming.”

For color, black is trending along with silver and various grays, he said.

“Reds, greens and browns, as well as more muted colors, are on their way out. While in the '90s there was a trend for homes' roofs and sidewalls to be similar in color, the trend now is either light walls and dark roof or dark walls and light roof. This creates a very dramatic effect,” Miller said.

An expanding trend, solar roofing is breaking into the mainstream market.

“We find that about 50% of the homeowners who talk to us about roofing are at least thinking that solar could be in their future,” Miller said.

Homeowners thinking about solar can opt for a “solar-ready roof,” which is reinforced with brackets pre-installed for solar panels to be added in the future, he said.

On metal roofs designed to look like wood shake or slate, high density contoured foam inserts can be installed behind the metal panels in the areas where solar may be applied.

“These foam inserts go a long way in terms of enhancing the walkability of the roof for installing and servicing solar panels,” Miller said.

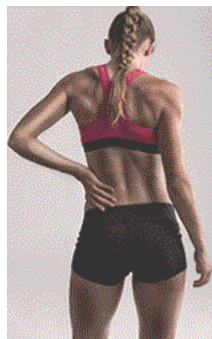
Solar panels have a life expectancy of about 20 years, so it's important to not install them over a roof that does not have the same or a longer life expectancy, he said.

A huge high-tech development is using satellite, aerial imagery or drones to get fast and accurate roofing measurements.

“Satellite or aerial imagery is available of most homes. These images allow contractors to measure and bid roofs remotely,” Miller said.

Being able to measure a roof from imagery allows roofers to sell roofs without ever visiting the home as well as hold virtual sales presentations, a blessing in the time of COVID-19, he said.

“Another great area of tech in roofing right now is visualization. Many manufacturers have visualizers on their websites where a homeowner or a contractor can upload photos of the home and then try on various roofing products and colors,” Miller said.



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