

# How Long Does a Metal Roof Last?



Metal may not be the most common type of residential roofing in the U.S., but it has been growing in [popularity](#) for some time now, particularly in regions with harsher climates. As the technology and manufacturing processes improve within the industry, metal roofing has become a more viable option for the general population, contributing to the growth of the [market](#) which is set to continue to increase over the next decade.

There are various reasons as to why these types of roofs are becoming so popular, including their long lifespan, durability, and low maintenance. We spoke to experts on the matter to gather their insights and knowledge on how long a metal roof lasts as well as how to make them last longer, and when they should be replaced.

## So How Long Does a Metal Roof Last On Average?

A metal roof typically lasts between 40 and 100 years, but this life expectancy can vary significantly. “The exact lifespan of a metal roof depends on several factors” says Founder and CEO of [Phoenix Roofing & Repair](#) Jeff Guthrie, “including the type of metal used, the quality of the installation, and the climate conditions in which the roof is located”.

Assuming a [metal roof installation](#) is carried out by a professional, here are some of the available types of metals and how long they could last if they were subjected to a moderate climate.

| Material | Life Expectancy |
|----------|-----------------|
| Copper   | 100+ years      |
| Tin      | 100 years       |
| Zinc     | 60-100 years    |
| Steel    | 50 years        |
| Aluminum | 40-50 years     |

Copper tends to have the longest lifespan of any other metal roofing material on the market. It's resistant to rust, corrosion, and degradation, and its appealing appearance requires minimal upkeep. It is also lighter in weight than other roofing options, making for an easy installation. Copper, however, is the most expensive material for a metal roof, costing up to \$40 per square foot.

Although they may not be as aesthetically pleasing as other types of metal [tin roofs](#) can last up to 100 years and require very little maintenance. Metal roofs may often be associated with tin, but tin roofs are actually relatively rare and are usually only found on historic homes.

A zinc roof typically lasts between 60 and 100 years, but it can even reach 150 years if the home is located in a favorable climate. Zinc does not require maintenance as it is naturally durable and has a unique self-healing quality that allows it to form a protective layer and seal itself in case of scratches or dents. This material develops a natural patina over time, making it resistant to corrosion which darkens the metal over time.

Steel is another great option when opting for a metal roof. There are various types of steel on the market, with galvalume steel being the most popular. However, galvanized steel is less likely to corrode and easy to maintain, making it a viable option for homes located in high humidity or coastal areas. Steel tends to be the most affordable metal roofing material available, costing as little as \$4 per square foot.

Aluminum is another popular choice for metal roofs due to its lightweight nature, making it simple for installers to handle. It is also less prone to corrosion and rust compared to steel, and is resistant to high winds, making it an ideal choice for coastal homes.

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## What Can Reduce the Life Expectancy of a Metal Roof?

Although metal roofs are extremely durable, they're not indestructible. Before installing a metal roof, it's important to consider the factors that can reduce its lifespan.

- **Climate:** The durability of a metal roof depends heavily on the climate it must endure. The lifespan of a metal roof can be impacted by extreme weather and precipitation. High winds can result in the tiles or shingles detaching, and heavy rainfall will increase the likelihood of leaks. Exposure to extreme heat can also cause thermal expansion and contraction due to the sun's UV rays, which can shorten the roof's lifespan.
- **Roof Pitch:** Having a high-pitched metal roof can increase its life expectancy as the angle provides better drainage, which helps prevent water from pooling and causing damage. Higher-pitched metal roofs are also more resistant to strong winds, and the greater ventilation helps prevent rot and mold by reducing the temperature and humidity in the attic.
- **Roof Color:** The color of a metal roof can affect its lifespan. Dark-colored metal roofs absorb more heat and cause thermal expansion and contraction, reducing both their lifespan and energy efficiency. Darker-colored roofs also tend to fade over time, giving them a dated appearance.
- **Paint:** "Unpainted metals exposed directly in outdoor elements become susceptible towards rust & corrosion", says owner of [DMG interiors](#) Matthew Malczewski , with corrosion being another disadvantage if the home is located in a humid or coastal area. "As corrosion spreads, it will weaken the structural integrity of your roof over time and cause premature failure if not addressed promptly". In this case, a regular [roof inspection](#) for a cost of around \$350 would be necessary in order to maintain the roof's longevity.

## How Can You Make a Metal Roof Last Longer?

Although metal roofs have a long life expectancy, their lifespan can be increased if certain additions and improvements are made.

- **Sealant:** Adding a sealant when installing a metal roof will protect it from corrosion and wear. This can add \$2 to \$4 a sq.ft to the installation costs and will make the roof last longer.
- **Ventilation:** Another important aspect of prolonging a metal roof's longevity is keeping it ventilated. Heat rises, so the underneath of a metal roof can get very warm and damage its integrity. [Installing a roof vent](#) will allow for this hot air to escape and can cost between \$300 and \$550.
- **Coating:** Adding a coating to your metal roof is another crucial element to maintaining its longevity. "If the roof has a high-performance coating, that coating will last 40-50 years but the product can be repainted at that time, meaning that the roof is still sustainable and functioning", says Todd Miller, Vice President of the [Metal Roofing Alliance](#). "Aluminum roofs in particular can have their lives extended virtually indefinitely with repainting."
- **Color:** Choosing a light-colored metal roof can also prolong its lifespan as they are more reflective which reduces heat absorption and thermal stress.

## When to Replace Your Roof

Homeowners should consider replacing their roof once they start to notice any damage, drooping, leaks, or rotting. Replacing an old roof with a metal one will ensure the integrity of the home, increase its energy efficiency, and will last a lifetime.

For homes with existing metal roofs, it's important to look out for the signs of damage and when it needs replacing, especially if the roof hasn't been replaced for some time. "If you see signs of rust in the panels or the paint is faded I would highly recommend having the roof inspected", says Alex Eagle, co-owner of [MBA Roofing](#). "This is because the spots that most of the water

passes through like valleys, crickets, and flashings are the first to deteriorate and you probably can't tell how bad it is from the ground.”

When the time comes to install a metal roof, spring or fall tend to be the best times of the year to do so, as “summer can be too hot and cause the roofing materials to expand”, says Guthrie, “while winter can be too cold and cause the roofing materials to contract, making it more difficult to properly install the roof.”

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## A Roof to Last a Lifetime

It's clear that metal roofs are a great option in terms of longevity, durability, and maintenance. Metal roofs are also highly recyclable, making them eco-friendly. What's more, “homeowners who choose metal roofing are often looking for increased home value and lower operating costs”, says Miller, which makes them attractive to home buyers, raising the resale value and ultimately increasing ROI.

Although metal roofing may be a big investment, those who opt for one are currently eligible for a **tax credit** of 10% of the costs (up to \$500). However, this does not include the metal roof installation costs which average at around \$22,000. But opting for a metal roof may also result in savings on home insurance costs, as metal roofs tend to be very appealing to **insurance companies** due to their fire resistance and durability. Metal roofs are also one of the most **energy-efficient** options out there, as Miller states that “through the use of heat-reflective coatings and also integrated thermal breaks, homeowners often report summer energy savings of 20% and even more thanks to the reduced air conditioning load.”

A roof replacement is something that most homeowners will only invest in once in a lifetime, so deciding on which material to opt for is important for the structure and integrity of the home in the long run.

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