

15 Insider Secrets

for Choosing the Right Commercial Roof and
the Right Roofing Commercial Contractor
in the Los Angeles Area



A Commercial Roofing Guide



How to choose the right roof

How to hire a commercial roofer

How to tell if they are qualified

What to look out for

1 How do I know if I need a new roof or just a repair?

Whether or not you need a new roof depends on a few factors...For purposes of discussion, let's assume your roof was installed correctly when it was originally installed. Let's also assume that you live in a moderate climate, like California.

Then, what really matters is how OLD your current roof is and what kind of roof you have.

Here's a general rule of thumb on how long a roof should last, otherwise known as its "useful life" – sloped roofs (shingles, tile, etc.) should be good for at least 20 years.

Flat roofs (built-up, modified bitumen, etc.) should be good for at least 10 years, although some systems are good up to 25 years.

If your roof is past its useful life, you should budget for a new roof. If it's not that old, ask your roofing professional if it was originally installed properly.

If it was, then a repair may be all you need – this will save you thousands of dollars.

Here are some other signs of roof problems:

- Gaps in flashing or between the deck and roof
- Seams that are pulling apart
- Bubbles
- Sealant degraded or coming off
- Rust



2 What kind of NEW roof is best?

You should consider several factors when choosing...

First, the roof you choose, whether it's a warehouse or office building, will determine



how long your building will last.

Of course, the usage and your budget will drastically affect the choice of roof type.

There are 4 main types of roofing for commercial buildings.

First type is Single-Ply: TPO (Thermoplastic Olefin) and PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride)

Benefits:

- Both are UV-resistant and Title 24-compliant – Cool Roof
- Heat resistant, cool to the touch
- Heat weldable, so the seams are very strong and repairs are simple
- Burn risk to the installers is low and fire risk to the owner very low
- Economical when compared to other 20 year systems
- Clean install (no fumes)
- Environmentally friendly

Disadvantages:

- It is a single ply system with no redundancy of layers
- It is vulnerable to puncture during construction or if not well taken care of by owner
- Some industry experts dispute the long-term durability of TPO when compared to PVC
- It's slippery to walk on when it's wet or icy
- There are fewer roofing contractors qualified to install it than traditional systems.

Second type is BUR – Built Up Roofing

Benefits:

- Very Durable
- The most common commercial roof system to date
- It has a long track record and has been around for over 150 years
- It has redundancy – multiple plies of protection
- Available in a coated or Cool Roof option
- 10 year systems are economical when compared to single-ply or APP.

Disadvantages:

- The standard installation does NOT meet Title 24 Cool Roof requirements
- Installation can be messy – lots of fumes
- Burn risk to installers is high which elevates risk to owner during installation
- California has designated asphalt and it's fumes to be a cancer risk
- Due to the nature of installation, details can often be overlooked by installers and leaks can result

Third type is Modified Bitumen APP – Atactic Polypropelene – more commonly referred to as “torch-down” roofing

Benefits:

- EXTREMELY durable roof system that can last up to 25 years or more
- Customized systems can be up to 3 layers for super-redundancy
- It also has a very long track record of performance throughout the world
- It is available in a Title 24 Cool Roof sheet as well
- Installation is very clean – fumes are present but much less than BUR

Disadvantages:

- It is applied with an open flame, so fire risk is high for unexperienced installers
- On larger commercial project, the cost is higher for APP than for other systems
- Installation typically will take longer for APP than for other systems

3 Can I RESTORE my existing roof?

You might be able to keep your existing commercial roof and simply do a RESTORATION on it ...

If your original roof was done correctly and quality materials were used, you're off to a great start.

Next, if the roof is within its original life span or not too far past, and has been reasonably well maintained, it may not need to be completely replaced. In many cases, we can clean it real well, and then apply a coating system, more commonly referred to as “Cool Roof Coating”.



First type is Coating-only - Elastomeric

Benefits:

- The elastomeric coating is UV-resistant and Title 24-compliant – Cool Roof
- Heat resistant, cool to the touch
- About 1/3 of the cost of a roof replacement
- Looks great after it's done

- Environmentally friendly – water-based

Disadvantages:

- It will seal minor imperfections, but coating alone will not stop leaks in many cases
- The elastomeric coating will bubble and peel in low areas with ponding water
- Coating thickness is hard to monitor and contractors can go thin
- Extended labor warranties not usually available on coating-only systems

Second type is Elastomeric Coating plus Emulsion

Benefits:

- Same benefits of coating, Title 24 compliant and UV resistant, cool to touch
- About ½ the cost of a roof replacement
- Looks great after it's done
- It has redundancy – multiple plies of protection
- The emulsion is the water-proofing, like an actual new roof
- Extended labor and material warranties are available

Disadvantages:

- It costs more than the coating-only system and takes longer to install
- The existing roof must be approved by the manufacturer for suitability of application, prior to an extended warranty being offered

Third type is Coating-only: Silicone Coating

Benefits:

- The elastomeric coating is UV-resistant and Title 24-compliant – Cool Roof
- Heat resistant, cool to the touch
- About 60% of the cost of a roof replacement
- Looks great after it's done and goes down quicker than emulsion and coating
- Extended warranties are available

Disadvantages:

- The silicone coating is relatively new to the marketplace and not well tested
- It is EXTREMELY slick to walk on when wet and has a “shiny” appearance.
- It costs more than the elastomeric option

4

Who manufactures the roof material?

Keep in mind, when you're picking out that new roof, who the manufacturer is. Most of the major manufacturers that you will find at your local roofing supply house are reputable and stable – but, not all of them. Why is this important?

It's important because if you have a material failure on your roof at any time during the warranty period (which can be up to 20 years, with some materials) you want to make sure there's a company there to remedy the situation or reimburse you according the terms of their warranty.



Stick with mainstream, stable manufacturers that have been around a long time and have deep pockets.

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How much will it cost?

The cost of a new roof will vary widely, depending on several factors – but, the most important factors are the size and difficulty of the job, the material you choose, and the contractor you hire.

Unfortunately, you can't do much about the difficulty and the size of your building. But, you do have some control over the material you choose and the contractor you hire (see section 8 on qualifying a contractor).



When choosing the material, here are some things to consider...

You're best to use the information in this report to get started and then do some research online, if time allows. Get a general feel for the performance and the cost of the materials you like and then narrow your choices down. If you have a roofing contractor that you trust, consult him for your options. Another great

avenue if you don't know anybody in the business is to hire a roof consultant – they are very knowledgeable and can perform a roof evaluation and make recommendations for you, as well. It may cost you some money to hire him, but sometimes that is the best avenue, especially if the project is extremely large or complex.

For a job of average size and difficulty, be prepared to spend anywhere from \$4.00 to \$7.00 per sq. ft for a new roof installation. (this is the square footage of the roof, including walls, NOT the floor of your building).

6 What time of year should I have it done?

Most people realize they need roofing work, during the rainy season, when they look up and see water dripping from the ceiling. Since the rain is usually in the winter season, common sense would dictate you have the work done as soon as possible – during spring or summer.

However, human nature being what it is, many decide to wait as long as possible and have the work done in the fall, just before the next rainy season. This is a big mistake.

Roofing contractors are usually swamped with business during the fall. Because of that, you are much more likely to have to wait – sometimes up to 4 weeks, before they can start.

Also, since they are so busy, you may end paying a higher price than you would during a less busy time of year – it's simple supply and demand.

If you know you need the work done, get it done in spring or summer, when contractors are less busy and more willing to give you the attention you deserve.

7 How long will my new roof last?

Generally speaking, a well-installed, high-quality commercial roof system will last you 20 years or more, provided it is kept clean and well-maintained over its lifespan.

TPO and PVC, depending on the mil-thickness, go from about 12 to more than 25 years.



The asphaltic products, such as built-up roofing and modified bitumen make up the majority of the market but vary widely in lifetime viability – mainly because there is such a variation in the number and types of plies installed, as well as the capsheet used. APP modified bitumen will usually outlast traditional built-up roofing by at least 5 years – more if you apply additional layers.

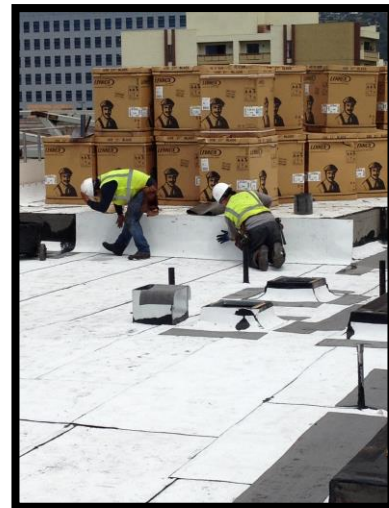
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Where do I find a good contractor?

I usually recommend that you start with fellow building owners to see if they have personal experience with a good contractor.

This is sometimes difficult with commercial roofing.

- I would look first to see if they are licensed – current and active. This is critically important for protection if you have questions about the quality when finished.
- The roofing company should be insured with adequate Liability to cover any accidents that might occur.
- Do they have a website? Do they have any reviews?
- Having a presence online with good reviews is a good start.
- Experience can play a huge part with timing and costs. Make sure they have experience with the type of roof you are purchasing.
- Are they certified by the manufacturer of the roofing you want?
- What is their warrantee of the system being installed?



Second, if you know what kind of roof you want, you can visit the website of the manufacturer – they sometimes list *certified installers*, by area, for the material you're looking at.

Anyone from this list is always a good choice, because they are experienced installing the type of roof you want. They are also pre-screened by the manufacturer for a valid license, sufficient insurance, and good reputation.

As a final note, it is never a bad idea to call your local roofing supply house and ask them what they think of your candidates – are they good guys? Do they pay their bills? Do they have a good reputation? And, they may also be willing to refer some other good roofers to you that they work with.

9 Is this roofing contractor qualified?

Not all contractors are suitable for hire. As stated previously, try to stick with reputable companies that are referred to you by someone you trust.

Also, check each of them out on the state of California website at:

<https://www2.cslb.ca.gov/OnlineServices/CheckLicense/LicenseRequest.asp>



Use this site to make sure they meet the following criteria...

- They hold a current & valid contractor's license, C-39, with the state of California
- They have NO outstanding public complaints or civil judgments listed
- Their license name matches their company name
- Their license is at least 10 years old

Lastly, if you know what kind of roof you will be using, make sure your contractor has a verifiable "certified installer" number from the manufacturer (if applicable).

10 If a contractor checks out OK on the state website, does that mean he's fully insured?

In short, the answer is NO. If you check out your contractor on the California CSLB website, it will tell you if they have a current and active license. And, if they do, that does mean they have a worker's compensation policy on file with the state.

However, it does NOT mean they have liability insurance. Liability insurance is very different from worker's compensation insurance – the state requires a contractor to have worker's compensation insurance, in order to have a license.

But, the state does NOT require a contractor to have liability insurance.

Whereas worker's compensation insurance protects you from a lawsuit if one of the workers gets hurt while working on your home, liability insurance protects your home against any damage that may occur as a result of having the new roof installed.

So, if you want your home protected, you need to make SURE your contractor has sufficient liability insurance.

If not, and he tears off your roof and a rain storm comes in and floods your business, you're out of luck. Or, if he's installing a new torch-down flat roof and he burns your business down – sorry ☹

You should ask your contractor to have his agent mail (or email) you an original liability insurance certificate, naming you as 'additional insured.' If your contractor is unwilling or unable to do this, don't hire him.

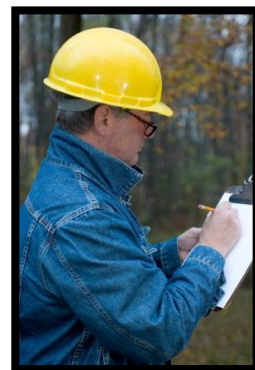
Certificates are easily forged by unscrupulous contractors – liability insurance in California is very expensive for roofers, and many "fly-by-night" companies don't want to pay for it.

11 Is this a qualified bid?

Not all estimates are created equal. Don't just look at the price and think that's all you need to know – far from it.

Make sure that any proposal you receive is IN WRITING, on a company form or letterhead, and make sure it contains at least the following information...

- Approx. number of included roofing squares (sq.ft/100)
- Approx. start date and estimated duration of the project
- Number of layers included in the tear-off (if applicable)
- Type of plywood and thickness being installed (if applicable)
- Type of underlayment and # of layers being installed (for sloped roofs)
- Type of inter-plyes and # of layers being installed (for flat roofs)



- Included sheet metal work – valleys, edge metal, riser metal, pipe flashings, coping metal, skylights, drain inserts, roof hatches, and A/C platforms and ducts.
- Ventilation – ridge vent, dormer vents, attic fans, and moisture vents
- Type of roofing material, including manufacturer name, product name, and system # (if applicable)
- Cleanup and permits
- Labor warranty (from contractor) and material warranty (from mfr.)
- Payment schedule

You would be well-served to give a copy of this list to each contractor bidding your job and tell them to make sure their bid includes all of these items.

If you receive a bid without any of these, ask them to revise it – if they don't agree to make the revisions promptly, exclude them altogether as a candidate.

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These contractors all keep telling me something different – who do I trust?

Like anything else, YOU have to be your own advocate for what you want on your own building.

If you do your research and narrow down your selection of roof systems to two or three choices, based on quality, durability, and price, then you will be able to develop your own “scope of work.”

That is, you will be able to give each roofing contractor that is bidding a list of the roof types that you want prices on. That way, each contractor will be bidding the same thing.

Of course, you may hear several different opinions as to which is better, etc. and you should listen and consider each recommendation.

Just keep in mind, that many contractors have biases that are based on their self-interest, not yours – for example, a roofer who is not an authorized installer for a certain product will obviously try to steer you away from that product.

The bottom line is to keep working until you get (3) qualified bids from (3) qualified contractors, each pricing the system that you have chosen. It's your money and your building.

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Why is there such a variation in price between my bids?

Many people get frustrated by a wide difference in prices they get from different contractors. Well, there are basically (4) parts that make up any price.

The first two parts are labor and material. The second two parts are overhead and profit. Now, most qualified contractors will come up with roughly the same labor and material cost for your project.



The variation comes from the overhead and profit. But, you shouldn't really concern yourself with all of these details.

Instead, focus on getting (3) qualified bids from (3) qualified contractors. Then, choose the one you feel the most comfortable with.

*NOTE – if you have a bid that is significantly lower (more than 15%) than your other bids, the warning bells should go off. Something is wrong – throw it out.

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What is the REAL cost of my new roof?

Rather than looking at just the up-front price of your new roof, you should base your decision on the “life-cycle” cost, instead.

Here's an example – let's say you've narrowed down your choice of roofing to (2) different roofs (a & b), but you're not sure which way to go. You should look at the total cost over a fixed time period, say 20 years.

Roof A will cost you \$10,000 – but since it has an estimated life of 10 years, you will need to replace it again at year 10.

At an average cost increase rate of 5% per year, the year-10 replacement will cost you approx. \$16,000.

So, over 20 years, Roof A will actually cost you \$26,000.

Roof B will cost you \$18,000 now, but will be good for the entire 20 years.

This means, that over 20 years, Roof A will cost \$26,000 and Roof B will cost you only \$18,000 – this is a savings of \$8,000.

So, even though Roof B looks more expensive on the estimate, it is actually a much better value.

15 What is the REAL warranty on my new roof?

Make sure your contractor specifies, in writing, on your contract, both your material warranty (which comes from the manufacturer) and your labor warranty (which comes from your contractor).

So many people get 'fooled' into thinking that they have a 20 year warranty on their new roof, because they see the words "30 year warranty" on their contract – nope, that's not the case.

That 20 year warranty is the material warranty from the manufacturer, and in almost all cases is actually a pro-rated, limited warranty, as well.

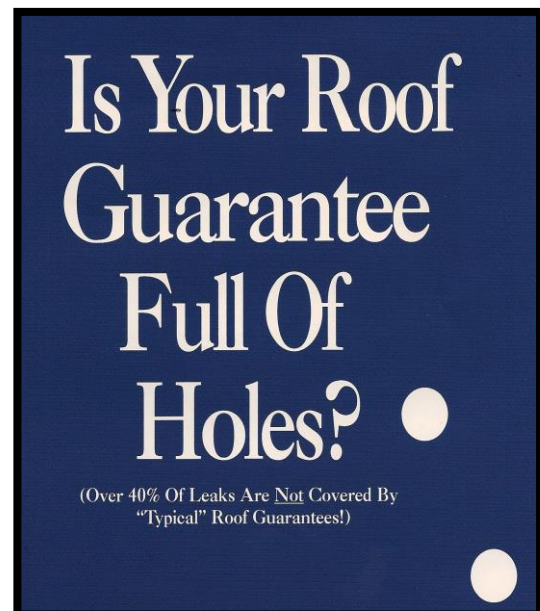
However, if you have a leak, you're going to call your roofer – and it's the labor warranty on your contract that determines whether or not you're going to have to pay for that repair.

A fairly standard labor warranty is 5 years on new roofs and 2 year on repairs, and you shouldn't accept anything less.

Also remember, just because a contractor gives you a labor warranty, does not mean he will honor it or that he'll even still be in business that far in the future.

Reputable contractors know that installation problems will always show up in the first 5 years anyway – other guys who offer you something like a "10 year labor warranty" are just using a marketing gimmick to make the sale.

The exception to this rule, though, is that some roof systems are eligible for what is called an NDL warranty – this stands for "No Dollar Limit". This warranty will cover BOTH labor and materials for anywhere from 10 years to 20 years. And, the warranty is actually issued by the material manufacturer.



This is the best warranty you can get, because the manufacturer only allows certified installers to install their systems and they have an independent inspector OK the roof installation, after completion.

Also, you don't have to worry about your roofer going out of business or not returning your calls in 10 years – you can call the manufacturer directly.

Bottom line – labor warranties longer than 5 years are worthless, unless they are listed as NDL and are backed by a written NDL warranty from the manufacturer.

Who Are We?



Ferguson & Melvin Co. was established in 1979 and currently serves the Southern California area, offering high quality roofing installation and repairs.

We have a well established reputation for excellent customer service, high quality workmanship, and satisfied customers.

We offer a comprehensive scope of roofing services that includes roof repair, roofing tear off, carpentry services, sheet metal, and the installation of many different types of quality roofing materials.

We are licensed in the State of California – our license number is 579730. We carry \$2,000,000 in general liability insurance and have no outstanding complaints or judgements with the Contractors State License Board – this is after over three decades and thousands of customers.

We are certified installers for most major manufacturers, including GAF, Malarkey, Certainteed, Carlisle, Apoc, Tropical and many others.

We back all of our promises of excellence with written warranties for both labor and material. And, unlike many of our competitors, we will be around to honor it.

My name is Tom Melvin, and I've been the owner and operator of the company since 1995 – it was run by my father-in-law for the 16 years prior to that.

If you have a roofing concern and would like a free estimate or phone consult, feel free to call me personally at (818) 898-0900. Or, visit our website at www.fmroof.com.



Warm Regards,

Tom Melvin

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