OTTAWA ROOFING PRO

Storm Damage & Emergencies

Wind, hail and snow damage, temporary tarping, and what to do from inside while you wait for a roofer

5 Expert Answers from Roofing IQ

ottawaroofingpro.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Hail damage on an Ottawa roof: how do I spot it?

Hail damage shows up differently depending on what your roof is made of, and most of it is easier to see from the ground or the attic than from the roof surface itself.

What to look for without going up

Start at ground level and in the attic. From the ground, scan the ridge, the valleys and the lower courses of shingles with binoculars if you have them. In the attic, look for daylight, damp insulation or dark staining on the underside of the sheathing. Then check these places before calling a roofer:

- Gutters and downspout outlets: a heavy hail event knocks granules loose from asphalt shingles in large quantities. A sudden flush of dark granules after a storm is a sign worth noting.
- Soft metals on the roof: the flashing around a chimney, a skylight curb, a plumbing stack cap or a roof vent will show round dents from hail more clearly than shingles do. These marks are easier to photograph from the ground or a window.
- Window sills, air conditioning units and painted wood trim at the same height as the roof: dents or chipped paint on those surfaces confirm hail reached that elevation.
- Asphalt shingles themselves: hail bruises show as dark, roughly circular spots where granules have been knocked away, leaving the mat exposed. The spot may feel soft if you press it, but you do not need to go up to confirm damage. A roofer will check that.

On a flat roof or modified bitumen surface, hail can leave circular impressions in the cap sheet. On a metal roof, look for dents on any exposed flashings or trim visible from the ground.
What you are not looking for is cracking across the whole shingle or missing tabs. Those point to other causes. Hail marks are concentrated, roughly circular and scattered across the field of the roof rather than along one edge.

Document everything with photos and a note of the date. Your insurer will want to know when the storm occurred, so check Environment and Climate Change Canada's weather records for Ottawa if you are unsure of the exact date.

On the permit side, the City of Ottawa lists installing asphalt shingles as a project that does not need a building permit, though the 2024 Ontario Building Code still applies to the work. If the hail also damaged flashing, a skylight or structural elements, confirm with the City before that portion of the work starts.

When a roofer comes to assess the damage, ask them to put the sheathing condition in writing before the quote is finalized, because rotten or split sheathing found at tear-off is priced as an extra at published Ottawa-area rates of about $3 to $6 per square foot, and that line can grow after you have signed.

Q2

Ice storm damage to shingles in Ottawa: what to check?

Ice storm damage in Ottawa can range from a few cracked shingles to widespread granule loss, lifted tabs and exposed sheathing. Start your assessment from the ground and from inside the attic, not from the roof surface itself.

What to look for

From the ground, scan each slope with binoculars if you have them. Look for shingles that are cracked, missing, curled at the corners, or lying in the yard. Check the eavestroughs and downspout splash pads for granules, and look at the ridge, the hips and the flashing around chimneys, skylights and plumbing vents.

From inside the attic, use a flashlight and look at the underside of the sheathing. Frost, dark staining or damp insulation are signs that water has already found a path in. Take photos of anything that looks wrong, with the date visible if your phone records it. Indoors, if you see ceiling stains or active dripping, move belongings out of the way, place a container under the drip and take photos. If water is near a light fixture, an outlet or the electrical panel, leave that area of the house and call emergency services from a safe place.

On the code side, the 2024 Ontario Building Code (Div. B, 9.26.1.2.) requires roofing, including flashing, to be installed so it effectively sheds water and prevents moisture from entering the building. When shingles are replaced, the eave protection rule (Div. B, 9.26.5.1.) applies: eave protection must run from the edge of the roof at least 900 mm up the slope to a line at least 300 mm inside the inner face of the exterior wall. Ottawa's heating degree-days, around 4,440 to 4,520 depending on location, mean the climate exemption from that requirement does not apply here. The City of Ottawa's permit list names installing asphalt shingles as a project that does not need a building permit, though heritage-designated properties are not covered by that exemption.

When you get quotes, ask each roofer to put the following in writing: the scope of repair or replacement, whether a full tear-off is included or only damaged sections, the price per square foot if rotten sheathing is found at tear-off, what flashing work is included, how disposal is handled, and the written warranty terms. Published Ottawa-area quotes for a full shingle replacement with one-layer tear-off run about $8,000 to $22,000; repair-only work and partial replacements have too few published Ottawa figures to quote, so ask for an itemized written estimate. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, if the quote includes an estimate, the final charge cannot exceed that estimate by more than 10 per cent. The Construction Act requires you to hold back 10 per cent of the price of services and materials as they are supplied; ask a lawyer about release timing. You can also search the roofer's WSIB clearance online before work starts.

Before signing, ask the roofer to show you exactly which areas they consider damaged beyond repair versus areas they plan to leave in place, and why.

Q3

Photos of roof damage in Ottawa: what to capture?

Getting clear photos before a roofer arrives helps you document the damage, supports any insurer conversation, and gives contractors enough to provide a meaningful first estimate. Here is what to capture, all from safe positions on the ground, from windows, or from inside the attic.

What to photograph

From the ground, walk the full perimeter and shoot each slope straight on. Look for missing, curling or buckled shingles, dark staining along the eaves, granules collecting in the eavestroughs, and any visible gaps around the chimney, vents or skylights. Zoom in on valleys, which the 2024 Ontario Building Code requires to be flashed (Div. B, 9.26.4.3.), and around the chimney and vents.

From inside the attic, use a flashlight and photograph any daylight coming through the sheathing, frost or moisture on the underside of the sheathing, staining on the rafters or trusses, and damp or compressed insulation. Note whether the soffit vents appear blocked, since the Code (Div. B, 9.19.1.2.) requires at least 25 per cent of the required vent area at the bottom of the roof space.

From inside the living space, photograph any ceiling stains, bubbling paint or water marks on walls near the roofline. If there is an active leak, capture where the water is entering and how far it has spread. If water is near a light fixture, outlet or the electrical panel, leave the area and call emergency services from a safe place before doing anything else.

A few practical points on the photos themselves: include a wide shot that shows the whole slope for context, then a close-up of the specific damage. Photograph the eavestroughs if they are full of granules, since that is useful information for a roofer assessing shingle condition. Note the date and time on each image, either through your phone's metadata or by writing it down. If the damage followed a storm, photograph any debris on the ground as well.

When you share photos with a contractor, ask them to identify in writing what they see, what they recommend, and how they have priced any sheathing repairs separately, since published Ottawa-area quotes show sheathing replacement running about $3 to $6 per square foot as an extra, billed on what is actually found at tear-off.

If you would like local Ottawa roofing contractors to review your situation, the request form on this site sends your details to contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Q4

Wind lifted my ridge cap in Orleans, urgent?

A lifted ridge cap is urgent, yes. The ridge is the highest and most exposed point of the roof, and once the cap shingles are loose or missing, the sheathing and the top courses of field shingles are open to rain and snow. Have it looked at and covered before the next rain or snow.

The urgency depends on a few things a roofer will check: how many cap shingles lifted, whether the underlying ridge board or sheathing is exposed or already wet, whether the field shingles below the ridge are still sealed and flat, and whether the ridge vent (if you have one) is now open to the weather. A single lifted cap that is still sitting in place is a different repair from several blown completely off. Either way, the opening should be covered or secured before the next rain.

On the permit side, the City of Ottawa lists installing asphalt shingles as a project that does not need a building permit. The 2024 Ontario Building Code still applies: materials must meet CSA A123.5 and be installed to the manufacturer's written instructions, and fasteners must not be left exposed.

A fair repair quote for this job should spell out: the number of cap shingles being replaced, whether any field shingles below the ridge need to be re-secured or replaced, whether the ridge vent or ridge board needs attention, and the cost of any sheathing repairs if the wood underneath is found to be wet or soft. Ask whether emergency tarping is included if the roofer cannot get there same day, and get the scope and price in writing before work starts. Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, if the quote is signed at your home it is likely a direct agreement: you have 10 days to cancel after receiving the written copy, and the final charge cannot exceed the written estimate by more than 10 per cent.

While you wait for the roofer, go into the attic with a flashlight and look at the sheathing directly below the ridge: fresh water stains, damp insulation, or frost on the wood are signs that water has already entered and the roofer needs to know before pricing the job.

Q5

Emergency roof help in Ottawa at night, what can I do myself?

Stay inside and focus on what you can do safely from indoors or the ground. Do not go onto the roof, onto a ladder at the eaves, or onto a snow-covered surface at night.

What to do right now, from inside

If water is near a light fixture, an electrical outlet, or your main panel, leave that area of the house immediately and call emergency services from a safe place. A sagging or bulging ceiling is a sign of water pooling above it; leave the room.

Once you know the area is safe to be in, move furniture and belongings away from the wet zone. Place buckets or containers under drips.

Take photos and short videos of every wet spot, stain, and drip point. Note the time. Keep them for the roofer, and ask your insurer what they need.

From inside the attic, if you can access it safely through a hatch without climbing onto the roof, look for where water is entering. Frost on the sheathing, wet insulation, or a visible gap are useful things to photograph and describe to a roofer. Do not walk on attic joists in the dark.

From the ground outside, with a flashlight or your phone light, look at the roofline for anything obviously displaced: a large section of shingle, a piece of flashing, or debris from a tree. Note what you see. Do not try to reach or fix it tonight.

Tarping a roof is work for a roofer with fall protection equipment. O. Reg. 213/91 requires fall protection for workers at heights above 3 metres, and that duty sits with the employer, not you. The Occupational Health and Safety Act generally does not apply to a homeowner working on their own home, but the physical risk is the same regardless of the legal status. A wet roof at night is not a safe surface.

If you plan to contact your insurer, ask them what documentation they need.

In the morning, a roofer can assess the damage, apply a proper tarp or emergency repair, and give you a written quote. When the job is done, keep the written contract, the itemized quote, the written warranty, and your before-and-after photos together in one place.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Roofing Pro. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa or your own municipality) before starting any roofing project, and do not go on a roof yourself. Roofing work in Ontario must meet the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24). Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawaroofingpro.ca** for the latest answers.