

Roof coating do you really need it?

May 2008

If you're planning to have your tiled roof restored or painted, this fact sheet will guide you through the most common problem areas.

The Department of Consumer and Employment Protection and the Painters' Registration Board often receive inquiries and complaints from home owners about roof restoration and roof coating for tiled roofs.

The roof is a very important part of your home. It makes up about 40 per cent of the external surface and is your first line of defence against the elements. But it's important to distinguish between roof repairs and roof coating.

If they're not fixed, roof leaks can cause expensive problems and even be dangerous if water comes into contact with electrical wiring or fittings.

Roof coating (painting) can make your roof look attractive and may increase your property's value. Unfortunately, the actions and claims of a relatively small number of unscrupulous operators have adversely affected the reputation of the industry.

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Marketing tactics to look out for and how to deal with them

- Many problem operators specialise in door to door sales. A seller calls at your home unexpectedly without an invitation, or rings to make an appointment. You should be aware that the law on door to door trading states that you must be given a 10 day cooling-off period before you pay a deposit and before any work can proceed. For more information ask for a free copy of the department's booklet *Your rights when shopping* which contains full information about WA's door-to-door laws.
- In the past, some groups of people have been targeted by unscrupulous traders so take extra care when dealing with door to door salespeople if you are elderly or if you live alone. We suggest that you get a second opinion from trusted friends or relatives before agreeing to any work or signing any paperwork.
- Look out for fly-by-night operators who may offer a cheap job "because they are already working in the area". Often these people demand instant payment in cash and are long gone before their poor or incomplete work is noticed.



- Be very cautious about claims about the poor state of your property, eg “Your roof needs painting” or “Your tiles are in bad shape”. Always seek independent advice, preferably from a reputable tradesperson, to confirm what you have been told.
- Don’t fall for aggressive marketing techniques and don’t be hurried or bullied into signing anything. You can ask a door to door salesperson to leave your property and the law says they must do so.
- Check credentials and take time and care before deciding who to employ. Ask for a free copy of the department’s fact sheet on hiring builders or contractors - *Home building hiring someone*.
- Before you sign **anything**, read and make sure you understand all the small print (sometimes it is on the back of a work agreement or order form).
- Look very closely at attractive sounding long-term “guarantees”. Ask yourself how much they would be worth if the trader should sell or go out of business. Check exactly what the small print in the guarantee actually covers - sometimes it can be almost worthless after a short period!
- Check any written agreement before you sign to make sure you are clear what the cancellation fees would be if you should have a change of mind or a change in circumstances - sometimes they are as high as 30 per cent!

CAUTION: DO NOT SIGN any contract until you understand exactly what it means and you’re happy with all of the terms and conditions. Never sign a blank contract or a contract with blank spaces.

If you live in the Perth metropolitan area or elsewhere in the South West Land Division (except for the Shires of Mukinbudin, Mt Marshall and Naremben), roof coaters need to be registered with the Painters’ Registration Board.

You can check that they are registered by ringing the board on (08) 9476 1212. However the Painters’ Registration Board can deal only with complaints about poor work. It cannot help you if you have a dispute about a contract you have signed.

Common myths and fallacies about tiled roofs

The CSIRO has produced an information sheet dealing with some of the most common claims made by doubtful roof restoration firms. Here are the claims and how they stand up to informed scrutiny.

Myths and fallacy	Correct answer
“Tiled roofs need painting or coating”.	This is not generally true, unless you are concerned about the appearance of the roof, or want to change its colour.
“The CSIRO recommends our paint treatment”.	The CSIRO does not recommend products or roof-coating businesses.
“Prolonged weathering of the original surface makes concrete tiles porous”.	This is not true. Some clay tiles manufactured more than 20 years ago have been known to absorb water or to fret or crumble under adverse conditions but coating won’t fix this problem and such tiles generally need to be replaced.
“Concrete tiles absorb so much water that the roof can collapse and stumped houses can get pushed into the ground”.	This is not true.
“Lichen eats into concrete tiles”.	This is not correct. Lichen can sometimes block small drainage channels at the sidelaps of some tiles, but this is a minor maintenance issue.

Regional offices:

Goldfields/Esperance	(08) 9021 5966
Great Southern	(08) 9842 8366
Karratha	(08) 9169 2811
Mid-West	(08) 9964 5644
North-West	(08) 9185 0900
South-West	(08) 9722 2888

National Relay Service: 13 36 77

Quality of Service Feedback Line: Tel: 1800 30 40 59

Technical terms you may encounter

Ridge capping

The special tiles that run along the top of the roof, set in mortar.

Hip capping

Similar to ridge capping but the special tiles run along any sloping junctions at the tops of the roof tiles, also set in mortar.

Valley

The intersection of two sloping roof surfaces, towards which water flows (the opposite of a 'hip').

Eaves

The area underneath the lowest, overhanging part of the roof.

Fascia

The eaves gutter is normally fixed to a metal or timber fascia, which runs along the bottom edge of the roof.

Flashing

A strip of material, usually metal, that covers the junction between the roof tiles and another surface, such as a pipe, chimney, roof light or a wall.

Skillion

A roof which slopes in one direction only, frequently covering an addition to the home and it often has a shallower pitch (slope) than the main roof.

Sarking

A layer of boarding and/or a layer of waterproofing material fixed underneath the roof tiles. Waterproofing sarking is frequently needed under skillion roofs.



Facts about tiled roofs

Leaks are usually confined to small areas and caused by one or more of the following problems:

- **Cracked or broken cement mortar bedding to the ridge and hip capping.**
The capping should be rebedded or repointed.
- **Cracked or broken roof tiles (sometimes it's just one tile).**
The individual roof tiles should be replaced.
- **Roof tiles displaced.**
The displaced tiles should be put back into their proper position.
- **Blocked drainage channels under the 'sidelaps' of individual tiles.**
Any build-up of dirt or debris should be removed.
- **Flashings blocked, damaged or displaced.**
These problems should be corrected.
- **Blocked gutters (including valley gutters) and downpipes.**
These should be cleaned out.

CAUTION: If your roof needs checking or if you have a roof leak, it's best to employ an expert tradesperson to undertake the work for you. Walking around on roofs can be dangerous.

What to do if you want your tiled roof repaired or renovated

- Always obtain more than one quote, in writing, for everything except the smallest or most urgent problem and take your time deciding who should do the job. Remember you are fully entitled to say "no".
- Don't be taken in by special prices or promotional offers that require you to sign on the spot.
- Be aware that the biggest or best advertisements don't always indicate the best roof restoration firms. Similarly, your local handyman may not necessarily be the best person for the job.

- Don't deal with anyone who does not offer their full name and address or who provides only a mobile phone contact number. Check the White Pages for a listing and, if in doubt, check the business is properly registered as a company or has a registered business name which can be used to identify the people behind it.
- Be aware that a number of companies in the roof restoration industry change hands every few years, making some long term guarantees worthless.
- Only employ registered painters for any work involving roof coating (except in areas outside of the jurisdiction of the Painters' Registration Board). To ensure that the painter is registered, insist on seeing their current identification card or/and check with the Painters' Registration Board.
- Ask for names, addresses and telephone numbers of recent clients so you can obtain references to make sure they were satisfied with the work performed.
- Ask for written information and technical data on the paint material and sealers to be used.
- Ensure the trader has insurance to cover any personal injury or any damage done to your property or to your neighbours' property.
- Remove any clause from the contract that suggests that the guarantee is not valid if the owner or any other person on their behalf walks on the roof.
- Never pay a large deposit - 10 per cent is more than sufficient. If the work is to cost more than \$7,500 an amount of 6.5 per cent is the legal maximum.
- Never pay cash unless you are very certain whom you are dealing with and never let the trader drive you to the bank to get your money.
- Always obtain a detailed receipt.
- Remember your legal rights or entitlements for 'door to door' sales.
- If you do not understand a contract, ask family or friends to check it over with you, before you sign.

Facts about roof painting/coating

- Both the appearance and value of your home might well be improved by having your roof coated.
- Once coated, the roof may need to be repainted every few years.
- A proper roof renovation and coating operation should normally be expected to take about two days.

During and after the work

It is quicker and easier to have any problems dealt with while the operators are working so, if necessary, arrange for a competent friend or family member to keep a check on all stages for you, including completion. In particular ensure that:

- all preparatory work, such as water blasting is carried out successfully;
- sealer coats have been applied and also allowed to dry, prior to the application of finish coats;
- paint is not applied over fresh cement repairs;
- painting work is carried out in favourable weather conditions;
- there is no overspray to areas not to be painted, such as the glass panels on solar water heaters;
- your property including lawns, paths and driveways is left in a clean and tidy condition; and
- the roof is checked at intervals over coming months to ensure there is no breakdown of paintwork.

We are available

Consumer Protection can provide information or refer you to the appropriate authority if you have any queries or problems relating to home building or renovation work. However, the department is prevented by its own legislation from recommending traders or products.

For advice, ring the Consumer Protection Advice Line on 1300 30 40 54 (cost of a local call statewide). You can ring the Painters' Registration Board on 9476 1212.

