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Keeping a (Good) Roof Over Your Head

Next to the walls, perhaps nothing's more important to a house than the roof. While that's a very basic way of looking at things, a house is really not a house unless it has strong walls and a durable roof. Without strong walls there would be nothing to hold up the roof. And without a durable roof, braving the elements gets a lot more difficult.

To withstand those elements, which can include heavy rains, lots of snowfall or a host of other natural components, you'll need to recognize certain signs that your roof might be on its last leg. To safeguard against potential disaster, ask yourself the following questions next time you decide to check on your roof.

• Is outside light being seen through my attic? Contrary to popular belief, light you can see through the attic is not necessarily a sign that you need a new roof.

For instance, it's perfectly natural for light to get through if you have a shake roof, which is made out of wooden shingles made from split logs. That's because the individual shakes will swell and seal during wet months. However, if you don't have a shake roof, there's no reason you should be seeing through your roof.

• Are there signs of leaking? This can be in the attic or in the upstairs rooms if you don't have an attic. Signs can include stained ceiling tiles or drywall (in finished attics or upstairs rooms) or dark spots in the wood. Dark spots are often around vents or chimneys.

• Is this a current or past problem? Not all signs are indicative of a current problem. For example, if a dark spot on your ceiling is dry and hard, then it's an old problem that's already been fixed. However, if a spot is wet and soft, then it's a current problem. If you can't reach the spot to see if it's wet, try and reach it with a screwdriver or broomstick. If it feels soft to the touch, then you know it's a problem that needs addressing.

• Did an artist sneak into my home and paint shapes on my roof? Many times, stains from leaking roofs will look like an artist's rendition of an odd shape. If you start seeing dark spots in odd shapes on your roof, then it's probably not because Michelangelo snuck in to paint your ceiling. More likely, it's the sign of a leaky roof.



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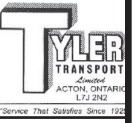
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