



“THE ONE WITH THE GREAT REPUTATION”™

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Everything you ever wanted to know about shake spot repairs (but were afraid to ask)

What are wood shake spot-repairs? Why are they done? Why are they so darn expensive, or should they be? What constitutes a quality repair? Does it really matter?

Well, first of all, not all roofers are created equal. As with ALL roof issues the critical issue is quality of craftsmanship. More on this topic will be discussed later.

Spot-repair is the individual replacement of worn shingles, done in order to prolong the life of a wood shake roof. To some folks, this may sound a lot like putting lipstick on a pig, but in many cases, spot-repairs are a great way to prolong the life of a wood shake roof. Spot-repairs tend to be proportionately more expensive than other kinds of repairs because 1, wood shakes cost more than composition shingles, 2, it is a very skill-intensive job (when done right), and 3, because wood shake roofs tend to be on houses with higher property values. A quality spot-repair is a good value, but a poor spot-repair is a complete waste of money. This guide will help you know the difference.

CAUTION! SPOT-REPAIRS ARE A VERY SUBJECTIVE THING. FIVE DIFFERENT ROOFERS/INSPECTORS/INSURANCE REPRESENTATIVES WILL PROBABLY TELL YOU FIVE DIFFERENT THINGS ABOUT SPOT-REPAIR.

I have worked long and hard to develop the BEST techniques and standards for shake spot-repair, and now I am going to share those secrets with you.

We already know that spot-repair is the individual replacement of worn shingles, done in order to prolong the life of a wood shake roof. How does one know which individual shingles should be replaced?

Rain, hail, and wind can all take a toll on a wood shake roof, but the most devastating antagonist to a wood shake roof is sunlight. Sunlight burns up the cell structure of wood, which makes the wood shakes thinner. Eventually, the shake might thin through completely exposing the black felt paper underneath. This almost always happens on the upper part of the shake where it is thinner AND exposed to sunlight between the two shingles of the next course up (SEE PHOTO #1). Left exposed, the felt paper will eventually deteriorate and allow water into the house.

Note: some roofers/inspectors/insurance reps/customers may also want curling or cracked shingles replaced. Cracked or curled shingles are not good, of course, but I often find that replacing all curling shingles can be cost prohibitive, particularly when measured against the estimated lifespan of a wood shake roof, which is only 12 to 16 years. Certainly my company, Braden Roofing, is capable of replacing these shingles, but it may not be the most effective use of your money. Generally speaking, the most effective use of spot-repair money is in replacing “burnouts”.

Photo #1



Shake shingle burn-out

Photo #2



Removing fasteners

A quality roofer will CAREFULLY remove the offending shingle, WITHOUT damaging the other shingles immediately adjacent. Often this requires some finesse, as each shingle may have fasteners from many other shingles penetrating, which must be removed from UNDERNEATH (SEE PHOTO# 2). This is where many roofers will break sometimes 3 or 4 other shingles for every one they replace. If this happens when you are paying for spot-repairs on a per-shingle or per-bundle basis, you will NOT get your money's worth. Extraneous breaks (in adjacent shingles) do happen, even with top quality repair persons (such as those at Braden Roofing!), but they should be kept to a minimum.

Photo #3 shows what a burned out shingle looks like. Notice in the shingle's shadow how much of the shingle has been vaporized by long-term exposure to sunlight. Lovely, isn't it?

Photo #3



Close-up of a burned out shingle. Notice the shadow. Lovely, isn't it?

Another surprising discrepancy in repairs involves felt paper (the black tarpaper basesheet). Quality roofers will splice in new felt paper with every shingle replaced (SEE PHOTO #4). This just makes sense because it is the felt paper, after all, which keeps water out of the house. Yet most roofers DO NOT splice in new felt paper. I have seen perfectly good roofs start to leak AFTER the repair work has been completed! Call me crazy, but I always thought that a roof is supposed to leak BEFORE the repair work is done and shed water AFTERWARDS, not vice versa! A quality spot-repair must include new felt paper.

Photo #4



Felt paper splice

Photo #5



All done, and done right!!

When the spot-repair is finally completed, a shiny new orange-colored shingle now takes the place of the old deteriorated shingle. Felt paper has been spliced in with the shingle, and no adjacent shingles have been damaged (SEE PHOTO #5).

For more information or to schedule a roofing estimate, please contact:

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