



# technical bulletin

Asphalt Roofing  
Manufacturers Association

1156 15th St., NW, Ste. 900  
Washington, DC 20005  
Tel: (202) 207-0917 • Fax: (202) 223-9741

## **Re-roofing: Tear-Off vs. Re-Cover**

When the time has come to re-shingle an existing asphalt roof, one must decide whether to remove the old shingles, or apply the new ones right over the existing layer. There is no easy, universal answer. Although each roof must be evaluated individually, there are some general guidelines to help make an informed decision.

In many cases, it is not necessary to tear off the old shingles before applying the new ones. If a roof has only one layer of shingles, laying flat, and the decking is in good condition, a tear-off is not needed. Not only will the existing layer (although old and weathered) provide a secondary back-up roof for the new shingles, but it will also save the cost and inconvenience of removing and disposing of the old shingles. It is suggested that before making a final decision, a check be made with local officials to ensure that all local building codes are being followed. In either case, adequate roof ventilation should be provided. See ARMA Technical Bulletin #209, "Ventilation and Moisture Control for Residential Roofing" for additional details and information.

The existing shingles will probably have to be removed if:

- An inspection of the deck reveals rotted or warped wood, or large gaps between the deck boards. Any rotten or damaged boards must be replaced before applying the new shingles. (Note: for best roof performance, consider re-decking "board" roof decks with a layer of APA approved ½" plywood, before applying the shingles.)
- There are more than two layers of existing shingles on the roof. It should be verified that the roof will support the weight of three layers of shingles. Note that the building code may require removal of more than one layer.
- The roof structure shows signs of sag across the ridge or truss lines. If the roof does not look straight and feel solid, have the structure professionally inspected to check for structural defects.
- The condition of the existing shingles is so rough and distorted that it would not be practical to flatten all raised areas enough for the new roof to lay flat.

**Note: This document was prepared by the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association and is disseminated for informational purposes only. Nothing contained herein is intended to revoke or change the requirements or specifications of the individual roofing material manufacturers or local, state and federal building officials that have jurisdiction in your area. Any question, or inquiry, as to the requirements or specifications of a manufacturer, should be directed to the roofing manufacturer concerned. THE USER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSURING COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS.**

**Nothing contained herein shall be interpreted as a warranty by ARMA, either express or implied, including but not limited to the implied warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose or non-infringement. IN NO EVENT SHALL ARMA BE LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGES WHATSOEVER, including special, indirect, consequential or incidental damages or damages for loss of profits, revenue, use or data, whether claimed in contract, tort or otherwise. Where exclusion of implied warranties is not allowed, ARMA's liability shall be limited to the minimum scope and period permitted by law.**