



Roof Coating

Do you really need it?

If you are planning to have your roof restored by coating or painting, this fact sheet will guide you through the most common problem areas.

Consumer Protection (a division of the Department of Commerce) and the Building Commission often receive enquiries and complaints from home owners with a cement, clay, metal or asbestos roof about restoration and roof coating.

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. It is important to firstly distinguish between roof repairs and roof coating (painting).

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

Roof coating, can make your roof look attractive and may increase your property's value. It has gained popularity in the last few years and so too have the number of operators in the industry. Unfortunately, the actions and claims of a relatively small number of unscrupulous operators have adversely affected the reputation of the industry.

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

Many operators specialise in door-to-door sales calling at your home unexpectedly without an invitation or ringing to make an appointment.

You should be aware that from 1 January 2011 the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), came into effect. It requires that consumers be given a ten business day cooling-off period before paying any money and before any work can proceed.

Under the ACL misleading conduct, false or misleading representations, unconscionable conduct and harassment by a seller is unlawful.

In the past, some groups of people have been targeted by unscrupulous traders so take extra care

when dealing with door-to-door sales people 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 operators who may offer a cheap job "because they are already working in the area". Often these people demand payment in cash immediately and are long gone before their poor or incomplete work is noticed. This is not permitted under the ACL and should be reported to Consumer Protection.

Be very cautious about claims about the poor state of your property, such as "your roof needs painting" or "your tiles are in bad shape". Always seek independent advice, preferably from a reputable tradesperson and get a second quote.

Do not accept aggressive marketing techniques and do not be hurried or bullied into signing anything.

If you have a complaint about the conduct of a business or salesperson, contact Consumer Protection for advice. Door-to-door sales people must explain that they are obliged to leave immediately if you ask them to do so. They are also restricted from contacting you again for at least 30 days (unless they return representing a different supplier).

For more information about the ACL and on unsolicited consumer agreements (door-to-door sales), refer to the Consumer Protection publication 'Unsolicited Selling' available online from the Department of Commerce website at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/ConsumerProtection. Click the 'Resources' tab, go to the 'Publications List' and look under 'Retail and Service Industries'.

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

Whether hiring from a door-to-door sales person or not, check credentials and take time and care before deciding who to hire. The Commission provides further information and advice in the publication 'Home building – hiring someone' which is available online at www.buildingcommission.com.au.

Before you sign anything, read and make sure you understand all the small print including anything printed on the back of a work agreement or order form.

Look very closely at long-term "guarantees". These may sound appealing but 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 for 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!

If you have a question or complaint about the marketing of a service, the conduct of a business or sales person, or about consumer guarantees, contact Consumer Protection on 1300 30 40 54.

Industry regulation

Consumers need to be aware that roof coating is a building service and roof coaters may need to be registered under the *Building Services (Registration) Act 2011*. The Registration Act requires your roofing contractor to be registered in the class of 'painter' if they are providing roof restoration or roof painting services in the Perth metropolitan area and also in most country areas. All roof coating contractors must have a painter's registration card with the licence type of 'contractor' if undertaking roof painting/coating services with a value over \$1,000.

Always ask to see your roofing contractor's identification card and check their registration details by calling the Commission on 1300 489 099 or searching the painters' register online at www.buildingcommission.wa.gov.au.

If the work exceeds \$7,500 there are specific requirements for making contracts, taking deposits, variations to the work and progress payments. For more information, refer to the Commission's free online publication 'The Home Building Contracts Act'.

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

Common myths and claims about tiled roofs

| Myths and claims | 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 for concrete tiles, however 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 will not 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. |

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 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.

- The time taken for a proper roof renovation and coating operation depends on the size of the roof however, for an average 3 bedroom 1 bathroom house it should normally be expected to take about three days.

Facts about tiled roof leaks

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

| Problem | Repair required |
|---|--|
| 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. |

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.

Checklist of 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 do not always indicate the best roof restoration firms. Similarly, your local handyman may not necessarily be the best person for the job.
- It is worthwhile to check the business registration details with the national register of business names available online at www.asic.gov.au.
- Only employ registered painters for any work involving roof coating. To ensure that the painter is registered, insist on seeing their current identification card or/and check with the Commission.
- 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.
- Ask the trader if they have insurance cover, for example public liability insurance.
- 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 after it has cured.
- Never pay a large deposit – a 10 per cent deposit is more than sufficient. If the work is to cost more than \$7,500 only 6.5 per cent can be taken under the *Home Building Contracts Act 1991*.

- 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, or seek legal advice before you sign.

Seek advice when things go wrong

If you are unhappy with the quality of workmanship provided, and the initial response from the company or tradesperson, find out where you stand before going back to them. Consumer Protection provides a free service and can advise you on your rights under the ACL and what the appropriate complaint process will be for your situation. Ring the Consumer Protection Advice Line on 1300 30 40 54 for the cost of a local call state-wide.

The Building Commission can assist with any queries or problems relating to painting or roof coating work and provides for a written complaint process (fee applicable). Call 1300 489 099 for the cost of a local call state-wide. For more information about making a written complaint, refer to the Commission's online publication 'Building Complaint Resolution'.

Please note that neither Consumer Protection nor Building Commission staff can recommend a particular trader or product.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

Disclaimer - The information in this fact sheet is intended as an explanatory guide to Western Australian legislation.