

How to Spot Hail Damage on a Roof: A Homeowner's Guide

After a heavy storm passes through Austin, one of the first worries for any homeowner is the condition of their roof. Hail can do a lot of harm in just a few minutes, and the damage is not always obvious from the ground. Knowing how to spot hail damage on a roof can save you from bigger problems like leaks, rot, and costly structural repairs later on. I have walked across hundreds of roofs after hailstorms, and I can tell you that the signs are there if you know where to look.

Start with a Ground Inspection

Before you climb a ladder, take a walk around your house. Look for things that fell off during the storm, like pieces of a shingle, granules from asphalt shingles, or bits of flashing near the chimney or vent pipe. Check your gutters and downspouts for an unusual amount of granules or small chunks of material. This debris is a strong hint that your roof took a hit. Also look at your drip edge and fascia for dents or warping. A metal drip edge that looks like it was hit with a hammer is a clear sign of hail impact.

Pay attention to the ground around your skylight or any rubber roof sections. If you see pieces of membrane or rubber on the lawn, that means the hail punched through. These early clues help you decide whether a full roof inspection is worth doing.

Get Up Close and Safe

Once you have a safe way to access the roof, start with a visual scan from the ridge. Walk slowly and look for patterns. Hail damage tends to be spread out, not clustered in one spot. You are looking for dents, punctures, cracks, and blisters. On an asphalt shingle roof, a hail strike often knocks off the protective granules, leaving a dark, rough spot. These bare areas can lead to faster aging and leaks over time. A single dent might not be a big deal, but if you see dozens of them across the roof, the integrity of the shingle is compromised.

On a metal roof, dents are the main thing to spot. Hail leaves round, shallow dents that can be hard to see from a distance, especially on standing seam panels. Run your hand over the metal, or use a chalk line to highlight low spots. If the dents are deep enough, the metal can crack or split at the seams. This is especially common around the drip edge and flashing where the metal is thinner.

Flat roofs and rubber roofs show damage differently. A rubber membrane can be punctured by large hail, leaving a small tear or hole. Look for blisters that were not there before. A blister is a

raised area where the membrane has separated from the deck. Hail can create new blisters or pop existing ones. Also check the seams of the membrane and the area around vent pipes and skylights. These are weak points where leaks often start.

Key Signs of Hail Damage

When you are on the roof, focus on these specific indicators. They are the most reliable ways to confirm whether you have hail damage.

- **Granule loss on shingles:** Hail knocks off the top layer of granules, leaving dark patches. Over time, these spots let in UV rays and water.
- **Dents on metal:** Round, smooth dents on a metal roof or drip edge. If the dent has a crack in the center, the metal is compromised.
- **Punctures in membrane:** On a rubber roof or flat roof, a puncture can be small but still cause a leak. Look for tears near flashing, skylights, and vent pipes.
- **Cracks around chimneys:** Hail can crack the mortar or flashing where the chimney meets the roof. This is a common spot for water to enter.
- **Blisters on flat roofs:** New blisters or popped blisters after a storm indicate that the membrane was stressed or hit.

These signs are not always dramatic. Sometimes the damage is subtle, like a hairline crack in the flashing or a small dent near the drip edge. But each one can lead to a leak if left alone.

How Hail Size and Wind Matter

The size of the hail is a big factor in what kind of damage you get. Hail the size of a pea or smaller usually does not harm a well-maintained roof, but it can still knock granules off old shingles. Quarter-sized hail starts to dent metal and can crack older flashing. Golf ball sized hail or larger can puncture a rubber membrane, break a skylight, or even crack a chimney crown. I have seen roofs where hail the size of a tennis ball punched clean through a flat roof membrane and left a hole big enough to see daylight.

Wind direction also matters. Hail driven by high wind hits at an angle, which can lift shingles and force water under the edges. This kind of damage is harder to spot because the shingle might look fine from above but is loose underneath. Check the edges of shingles and the flashing around chimneys and vent pipes for signs of lifting or separation.

Inside Signs of Roof Damage

Not all hail damage is visible from the roof surface. Sometimes the first sign is a water stain on your ceiling or a drip from a light fixture. After a hailstorm, check your attic for any new water

stains, especially near the chimney, skylight, or vent pipe. A water stain that is yellow or brown usually means the water has been sitting for a while. A fresh, dark stain could mean a new leak. Also look for wet insulation or mold growth, which are signs of ongoing moisture.

Leak detection is not always straightforward. A small puncture in a rubber roof might not leak right away if the membrane is still tight. But after a few hot days, the membrane can shrink and the hole can open up. That is why it is important to inspect both the exterior and the interior of your home after a storm.

Documenting Damage for Insurance

If you find signs of hail damage, document everything. Take clear photos from different angles. Use a ruler or a coin next to dents and punctures to show the size. Write down the date of the storm and the estimated hail size if you know it. This information is useful when you talk to an insurance adjuster. An insurance adjuster will look for the same signs you just checked: granule loss, dents, punctures, and cracks. Having your own notes and photos can help speed up the claim process.

Understanding [how to spot hail damage on a roof](#) is not just about spotting cosmetic flaws. It is about catching problems early before they turn into expensive repairs. A small puncture or crack can let in water that rots the decking, damages the insulation, and leads to mold inside your walls. A roof inspection after a hailstorm is one of the smartest things a homeowner can do.

When to Call a Professional

Some damage is easy to see, but not all of it. If you have a steep roof, a rubber roof with hidden punctures, or a complex roof with multiple skylights and vent pipes, it might be worth getting a professional roof inspection. A trained eye can spot subtle damage that a homeowner might miss, like a blister that is about to pop or a crack in the flashing that is not visible from below. Professionals also have tools like moisture meters and thermal cameras to find hidden leaks.

Knowing how to spot hail damage on a roof gives you confidence when dealing with contractors and insurance companies. You can point to specific problems and ask the right questions. But if you are unsure about your roof's condition, do not hesitate to call someone who does this every day. A thorough inspection now can save you from a bigger headache later.

In the end, a little time spent on your roof after a storm is time well spent. The signs are there if you look for them, and catching hail damage early keeps your home dry and your roof in good shape for years to come.