CALGARY ROOF REPAIRS

Permits, Codes & Safety

City of Calgary and other Alberta building permits for roofing, the Alberta building code, fall protection and asbestos in old roofing

4 Expert Answers from Roof IQ

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Table of Contents

1. How is roof snow load handled under Alberta building code?
2. Is a re-roof permit needed in Cochrane?
3. Replacing my roof in Calgary, do I need a permit?
4. Where do old shingles go after a Calgary tear-off?

Q1

How is roof snow load handled under Alberta building code?

Snow load in Alberta is governed by the **National Building Code – 2023 Alberta Edition**, in force since May 1, 2024, and it shapes both how new roofs are engineered and what a homeowner should watch for after a heavy snowfall.

How the code approaches snow load

The NBC sets a "specified snow load" for each location based on ground snow data. The code requires structural designers to account for the full combination of snow weight, rain-on-snow surcharges, and wind redistribution across the roof surface. Flat and low-slope roofs collect more snow than steep-pitched ones because snow slides off a steep slope; that is why flat-roofed garages, additions and infills in Calgary need careful structural attention.

The load calculation is the engineer's or designer's job, not the roofer's. A roofer installs the membrane or shingles; a structural engineer or the original building designer determines whether the framing can carry the load. If you see a ridge sagging, rafters bowing, or doors and windows sticking after a heavy snowfall, those are structural warning signs, not roofing ones.

If you notice visible deflection or hear cracking sounds from the structure during or after a heavy snow event, leave the building and call emergency services from outside. Do not go into the attic to investigate.

For existing homes, the code applies when structural work is done. A like-for-like shingle replacement does not change the load on the structure, but switching to a significantly heavier material, such as real slate or clay tile, can. The City of Calgary requires a building permit for a change to clay roofing material, and a structural check is prudent any time you add substantial weight to an older roof structure.

Practical points for Calgary homeowners

Chinooks complicate the picture here. Calgary averages roughly 46 chinook days a year, so a roof can go from a full snow load to bare in an afternoon, then refreeze overnight. That rapid cycling stresses flashings, eave protection and the membrane more than the static weight does. Ice dams form when meltwater backs up behind a frozen eave, and the fix is better attic insulation and ventilation, not just clearing the snow.

On flat roofs, ponding after a melt-and-refreeze cycle is a warning sign. Water weighs about one kilogram per litre; a few centimetres of standing water across a large flat roof adds up quickly. If a drain is blocked and water is ponding, have a roofer clear it rather than going up yourself.

Clearing snow from a roof yourself is genuinely dangerous. Alberta's OHS Code requires fall protection for workers at 3 metres or more above the level below, and a wet or icy roof surface makes that threshold easy to reach. A roof

rake used from the ground is the only safe DIY option for a typical house, and even then, be aware of ice falling from the eave.

For a structural concern after unusual snow accumulation, the right call is a structural engineer, not a roofer. For a leak or membrane damage that follows a heavy snow event, a roofer is the right trade.

Q2

Is a re-roof permit needed in Cochrane?

For a straight like-for-like re-roof in Cochrane, no permit is needed. The Town of Cochrane's own permit guide lists "replacing roofing or siding" as work that does not require a permit, and that aligns with Alberta's Permit Regulation, which exempts re-roofing done for appearance or maintenance when the new material is of a similar type and no structural change is involved.

What "like-for-like" means here

Same material to same material: asphalt shingles replaced with asphalt shingles, a flat membrane replaced with a comparable membrane. That work falls clearly within the exemption. Where it gets less clear is a switch between material types, say from cedar shake to asphalt, or from asphalt to metal. The provincial exemption is written around "a similar type of material," so a switch may or may not fall within it. The Town of Cochrane is the right place to ask before you sign anything, and your contract should spell out who is responsible for arranging any permit if one turns out to be required.

Structural work is a separate matter entirely. If a roofer finds rotted or damaged decking, sagging rafters, or any framing that needs repair or replacement, that work can trigger a permit regardless of what goes on top. Get that confirmed with the Town before the job starts if there is any sign of structural damage.

Solar panels are a different case. A building permit may be required for heavier roof-mounted collectors, and photovoltaic systems need an electrical permit and a licensed electrical contractor. Confirm both with the Town of Cochrane before installation.

A few other things worth confirming before you hire a roofer in Cochrane. If any deposit changes hands before the work is complete, the contractor must hold an Alberta prepaid contracting licence; check it on Service Alberta's online lookup. Ask for a WCB-Alberta clearance letter as well, because if a contractor without WCB coverage is injured on your property, you could be responsible for outstanding premiums. Get everything in writing: scope of work, materials, tear-off and disposal, decking allowance, eave protection, flashings, start and completion dates, and a holdback until the job is done to your satisfaction.

If your home was built before 1990, mention it to the roofer before tear-off begins. Older roofing materials can contain asbestos, and Alberta OHS requires that removal be handled by trained workers with waste taken to an approved landfill.

Q3

Replacing my roof in Calgary, do I need a permit?

For most Calgary homeowners replacing their roof, no permit is required. The Alberta Permit Regulation exempts re-roofing done for appearance or maintenance when the new material is of a similar type, there is no structural change, and health or safety is not at risk.

What that means in practice

If you are swapping asphalt shingles for asphalt shingles, you are in the clear. The City of Calgary's own storm-damage repair guidance confirms that replacing or repairing roofing materials does not need a permit. The same applies to cedar shake replaced with cedar shake, or a flat membrane replaced with a comparable flat membrane.

A permit is required when the work crosses into different territory. The City specifically lists changing from shingles to clay roofing material as an example that needs a building permit. If there is structural damage to rafters, trusses or sheathing beyond routine decking replacement, the City recommends hiring a structural engineer, and that work would also trigger a permit. A skylight that changes size needs both a development and a building permit; replacing one with the same dimensions does not.

Switching from shingles to metal is a common question, and the honest answer is: confirm with the City of Calgary before you sign. The provincial exemption covers re-roofing with a similar type of material, and whether metal qualifies under that exemption for your specific project is something the City's permit office can answer directly. Put it in writing, and make sure your contract states who is responsible for arranging any permit if one turns out to be needed.

A few other things worth knowing before the work starts. The National Building Code (2023 Alberta Edition, in force since May 2024) requires eave protection, commonly called ice-and-water shield, extending at least 900 mm up the slope to a point at least 300 mm inside the inner wall line. Calgary's freeze-thaw cycle, roughly 128 cycles a year on average, makes this more than a code formality; it is the main defence against ice dams working water under the shingles. A roofer who skips it on a Calgary re-roof is cutting a corner that will likely cost you later.

Before hiring anyone, check two things yourself: the contractor's Alberta prepaid contracting licence through Service Alberta's online lookup (required if any deposit is collected before the work is complete), and a current

WCB-Alberta clearance letter confirming their account is in good standing. WCB-Alberta notes that hiring a contractor without coverage could leave you responsible for outstanding premiums. Get a written contract that spells out the scope, materials, tear-off and disposal, decking allowance, eave protection, flashings, start and completion dates, and the payment schedule.

If a permit does apply to your project, a Calgary residential alteration permit runs about $206 based on the 2026 fee schedule, which is a small line item relative to the overall job cost.

Q4

Where do old shingles go after a Calgary tear-off?

Most torn-off shingles from a Calgary roof end up in a landfill, but the picture is more layered than that, and it matters when you are comparing quotes.

Where the material actually goes

Asphalt shingles are a petroleum-based composite: a fibreglass or organic felt mat, asphalt coating and mineral granules. Calgary's waste haulers and roofing contractors typically take tear-off shingles to one of the regional landfills that accept construction, renovation and demolition (CRD) waste. The City of Calgary operates the Shepard Landfill and the Spyhill Landfill, both of which accept CRD material from contractors.

A growing share of old shingles is diverted to asphalt recycling. Recycled shingles are ground into crumb and used as aggregate in road base, cold-patch asphalt and new asphalt mix. Several Alberta asphalt recycling facilities accept roofing tear-off, and some Calgary roofing contractors sort and haul shingles separately to those processors rather than the landfill. If sustainability matters to you, ask each contractor directly whether they recycle the tear-off and where it goes; get the answer in writing because it is easy to claim and hard to verify otherwise.

One material that changes the disposal picture entirely is asbestos. Buildings constructed before roughly 1990 carry a real risk that roofing felts, flashings or underlayment contain asbestos. Under Alberta OHS rules, removal must be done by trained, competent workers and the waste must go to an approved landfill that accepts hazardous material, not the general CRD pile. If your home pre-dates 1990, ask the contractor whether they will test or assess for asbestos before tearing off; a reputable one will flag this in the scope.

What this means for your quote. Disposal is a real cost, and how it is handled affects the price you see. A proper quote should spell out tear-off and haul-away as a line item, not bury it in a lump sum. On a typical Calgary house, tear-off of a single layer runs roughly $1 to $4 per square foot of roof area; a second layer adds to that. If the quote is suspiciously low, ask whether disposal is included or whether a bin will be left on your property and billed separately at the end.

A few other things worth confirming before you sign: the contractor should leave the site clean, with all nails picked up by a magnetic roller and no shingle debris in the garden or eavestroughs. That is standard practice, not a favour, and it should be stated in the contract. Also confirm that the bin or trailer will not damage your driveway, and who is responsible if it does.

If your tear-off involves a pre-1990 home, or if you are switching from cedar shake (which sometimes has asbestos-containing underlayment beneath it), raise the asbestos question before work starts, not after the crew is already on

the roof.

Curious what local roofers would charge for tear-off and disposal on your specific roof?

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Calgary Roof Repairs. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority (the City of Calgary or your own municipality) before starting any roofing project. Information is current as of November 1, 2026 and may change. Visit **calgaryroofrepairs.com** for the latest answers.