CALGARY ROOF REPAIRS

Roof Replacement

Tear-off vs overlay, re-decking, underlayment, ice and water shield, timing and what a full replacement involves on a Calgary home

5 Expert Answers from Roof IQ

calgaryroofrepairs.com/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. Should my new Calgary roof get synthetic underlayment?
2. Which is the right roof for a windy Cochrane hilltop?
3. How do I know the new underlayment went on my Calgary roof?
4. Do I need to clear my Calgary attic before the roofers come?
5. Where should my car be parked during a Calgary tear-off?

Q1

Should my new Calgary roof get synthetic underlayment?

Synthetic underlayment is worth the upgrade on a Calgary roof, and most roofers here will quote it as their standard product. The cost difference over felt is modest, typically a few hundred dollars on a full replacement, and the performance gap in this climate is real.

Why Synthetic Makes Sense Here

Calgary's roughly 128 freeze-thaw cycles a year, combined with chinook winds that can lift and crease shingles, put underlayment under constant stress. Synthetic underlayment is lighter, tears far less during installation, and holds up better when shingles are temporarily lifted by wind. Felt, especially the lighter No. 15 grade, absorbs moisture, wrinkles when wet, and can dry out and become brittle in Calgary's low humidity. Synthetic products resist both problems.

That said, underlayment is only part of the water-management picture. The National Building Code (2023 Alberta Edition) requires eave protection on shingle, shake and tile roofs: a self-sealing modified bitumen membrane (ice-and-water shield) or an approved alternative, running at least 900 mm up the slope and to a line at least 300 mm inside the inner face of the exterior wall. In Calgary, with its degree-day count, the mild-climate exemption does not apply, so this strip is mandatory. Synthetic underlayment runs above that eave protection layer, covering the rest of the deck.

The City of Calgary also recommends continuous ice-and-water shield over the entire roof deck to combat ice dams, which is a step beyond the code minimum. On a house with a history of ice damming or poor attic ventilation, that full-coverage approach is worth discussing with your roofer.

A permit is not needed for a like-for-like shingle replacement in Calgary, so the underlayment choice does not change the permit picture. If you are switching materials entirely, confirm with the City of Calgary before signing.

When you are comparing quotes, ask each roofer to specify the underlayment product by type and weight, not just "synthetic." Ask whether ice-and-water shield is included at the eaves only or over the full deck, and what the per-sheet price is for any decking replacement discovered once the old roof comes off. A quote that bundles everything into one line without specifying materials is harder to compare fairly.

If hail is part of the reason you are replacing the roof, ask your insurer before you sign anything. They may have requirements or preferences about the shingle class, and some offer meaningful premium reductions for Class 4 impact-resistant products. Your insurer is the right first call, because what they cover and what discount they offer should shape the product conversation with your roofer. Once you know where you stand on coverage, the request form on this site reaches local Calgary roofers who can put the underlayment spec in writing.

Q2

Which is the right roof for a windy Cochrane hilltop?

Wind is the deciding factor on a Cochrane hilltop, and the roofing choices that hold up best are metal standing seam, high-wind-rated architectural asphalt shingles, and impact-resistant Class 4 shingles, roughly in that order of wind resistance.

What Wind Does to a Roof

Wind lifts shingles from the edges and rakes first, then works its way up the field. On an exposed hilltop above Cochrane, where chinooks and cold fronts funnel through the valley, that edge pressure is higher than on a sheltered lot in town. The shape of your roof matters almost as much as the material: a hip roof, where all four sides slope down to the eaves, sheds wind load far better than a gable roof with its flat triangular ends. If you have a gable roof and you are replacing it, ask the roofer whether adding hip returns at the rakes is worth considering; it is a structural question that would need a Town of Cochrane building permit.

Metal standing seam is the strongest choice for a windy site. The panels are mechanically fastened along hidden clips, so there are no exposed fasteners to back out and no shingle tabs to lift. Stone-coated steel is a step down in wind resistance but still outperforms asphalt. Installed cost for metal on a typical Calgary-area house runs roughly $11 to $20 per square foot, so $20,000 to $50,000 depending on the product and roof complexity.

Class 4 impact-resistant asphalt shingles are worth considering for two reasons on a Cochrane hilltop: they carry higher wind ratings than standard architectural shingles, and they resist the hail that rolls through the region every summer. The Insurance Bureau of Canada notes that a majority of insurers offer discounts of up to 50% on home insurance for hail-resistant materials, so ask your insurer what applies before you choose a product. Cost runs roughly $13,000 to $25,000 for a typical house, about 10 to 20% more than standard architectural shingles.

Standard architectural (laminated) shingles are the most common choice and cost roughly $10,000 to $24,000 installed with tear-off. They are adequate on a sheltered lot but on an exposed hilltop you want to ask what wind rating the shingle carries, whether the roofer follows the manufacturer's high-wind fastening pattern, and whether eave protection (ice-and-water shield) runs at least 900 mm up the slope and to a line at least 300 mm inside the inner face of the exterior wall, as required under the National Building Code, 2023 Alberta Edition.

Permits in Cochrane: like-for-like re-roofing with no structural change needs no permit under Alberta's Permit Regulation, and the Town of Cochrane lists replacing roofing as permit-exempt. If you switch material types or do any structural work, confirm with the Town before starting.

A few other things to nail down with any roofer quoting this job: starter strip and eave protection installed to code, all flashings replaced rather than reused, ridge venting that will not back-draft in a chinook (a baffled or low-profile

ridge vent is better than an open box vent on a windy site), and a written contract that spells out the wind-rating of the product, the fastening schedule, and a holdback until the work passes your own inspection.

Check each roofer's Alberta prepaid contracting licence on Service Alberta's online lookup and request a WCB-Alberta clearance letter before anyone starts work. Ask every roofer who quotes a Cochrane hilltop what wind rating the product carries and how they fasten it.

Q3

How do I know the new underlayment went on my Calgary roof?

Most homeowners never see the underlayment go on, because it disappears under the shingles within hours. Here is how to get reasonable confidence it was done correctly, without climbing onto the roof yourself.

What to look for before the shingles go on

The best window is the day of installation. If you can be home, walk around the perimeter while the crew is working. Underlayment is a large roll of material, typically a synthetic sheet or felt, and it covers the entire deck before a single shingle is nailed. You should be able to see it draped across the roof from the ground. Along the eaves, the National Building Code requires a self-adhering modified bitumen membrane (ice-and-water shield) running at least 900 mm up the slope to a point at least 300 mm inside the inner face of the exterior wall. In Calgary's climate, with roughly 128 freeze-thaw cycles a year, this eave protection is not optional and it looks visibly different from the dry-laid underlayment above it: it is thicker, darker and sticks directly to the deck.

If you arrive and the shingles are already on, you have missed the visual window. That is not unusual, but it means you need to rely on documentation.

Before work starts, ask the roofer to photograph the underlayment in place. A professional crew will do this routinely, especially on insurance jobs. The photos should show the ice-and-water shield at the eaves, the lapped rows of underlayment above it, and any valley or penetration details. Ask for these photos as a condition of final payment, not as an afterthought.

Check the quote and invoice. A proper written contract under Alberta's Consumer Protection Act must describe the materials in detail. It should name the underlayment product, specify that ice-and-water shield is included at the eaves (and in valleys if that was agreed), and list the square footage. If the invoice just says "underlayment included" with no product name or quantity, push back before you pay.

Check the attic after the job. From inside, look at the underside of the roof deck with a flashlight. New nails from the shingles should be visible in a consistent pattern across the decking. If you see large gaps in the nail pattern near the eaves, or if the deck looks untouched in places, that can hint at incomplete coverage, though it is not conclusive on its own.

Ask about the leftover materials. A legitimate crew will have empty rolls of underlayment and ice-and-water shield on site or in the bin. The roll labels show the product name and coverage area. If the roofer says they took everything away before you could see it, that is worth noting.

Hold back payment until you are satisfied. Alberta's consumer-protection rules allow you to include a holdback in the contract, and it is wise to do so. Keep a written holdback on part of the total, released after a final walkthrough and receipt of the photos and warranty documents.

If you have a genuine concern that underlayment was skipped entirely, a paid roof inspection by an independent inspector (typically $150 to $400 in Calgary) can sometimes detect it through thermal imaging or by examining exposed areas around flashings and vents, though no inspection method is perfectly conclusive once shingles are down.

The simplest protection is to set the expectation before the job starts: written scope, photos during installation, and a holdback until you have both.

Q4

Do I need to clear my Calgary attic before the roofers come?

For most Calgary re-roofing jobs, you do not need to empty your attic, but a few minutes of preparation up there will protect your belongings and help the crew work safely.

What actually happens in your attic during a re-roof

Tearing off old shingles sends vibration through the roof deck. Dust, dried caulk, old insulation fibres and the occasional nail or staple can sift down through gaps around light fixtures, bathroom fans, attic hatches and any penetrations that were never perfectly sealed. If your attic is used for storage, anything sitting directly under the deck or near a penetration is at risk of getting dusty or dinged.

The crew will not go into your attic during a standard shingle replacement. Their work stays on top of the deck. But they will need clear access to the attic hatch if they spot a problem with the deck from above and need to check for rot or soft spots from below, which is more common than people expect in Calgary given our freeze-thaw cycles and the ice damming that comes with chinooks in winter.

Before the roofers arrive, do these four things:

- Move stored items away from the attic hatch and from directly under any roof penetrations (vents, skylights, chimneys).
- Lay an old sheet or drop cloth over anything you cannot move, especially if your insulation is loose-fill that can shift around.
- Check the attic yourself for any existing water stains, frost patches or soft spots on the deck, and photograph them. This gives you a baseline if a dispute arises later about pre-existing damage versus work-related damage.
- Make sure the attic hatch opens freely and is not blocked from below by furniture or from above by insulation bales.

One thing worth mentioning: if your house was built before 1990, some insulation and roofing materials from that era may contain asbestos. Alberta OHS requires that removal of asbestos-containing material be done by trained, competent workers and that the waste go to an approved landfill. If you are not sure what your insulation is, have it tested before anyone disturbs it, including the roofers working overhead.

On the ventilation side, a good roofer will inspect your soffit and ridge vents while they are up there. The National Building Code requires attic vent area of at least 1/300 of the insulated ceiling area, with at least 25% of that at the top and 25% at the bottom. If your ventilation is inadequate, replacing shingles without fixing it will bring back the same ice dams and frost problems within a season or two. Ask the crew to flag anything they notice.

Finally, if your attic has a finished floor or is used as a living space, let the contractor know before they start. That changes how they handle the deck work and may affect their decking allowance in the quote.

Q5

Where should my car be parked during a Calgary tear-off?

Moving your car off the driveway entirely is the safest call on tear-off day, ideally to the street in front of a neighbour's house or around the block.

Here is why it matters more than most homeowners expect. A Calgary tear-off generates a fast, heavy stream of old shingles, nails, felt paper and sometimes rotted decking, all of it dropping from height into a dump trailer or onto a tarp below. Crews work quickly and debris travels. A shingle edge or a roofing nail landing on a hood or roof panel from two storeys up will dent or scratch it, and that damage is on you unless you have a clear agreement in writing with the contractor beforehand. Most roofers carry commercial general liability insurance, but a claim for a dented car is a headache neither side wants.

Move the car before the crew arrives, not after they start. Once bundles of new shingles are loaded on the roof and a dump trailer is positioned in the driveway, repositioning vehicles becomes difficult and sometimes impossible without moving equipment.

A few practical points for the day:

- Clear the driveway completely so the trailer can sit as close to the house as possible; this shortens the throw distance and keeps debris contained
- If you have a detached garage under or near the work area, move anything stored outside it and close the doors
- Warn any neighbours whose driveways or vehicles are close to the drop zone, especially on a semi-detached or zero-lot-line property
- Ask the crew where they plan to stage the trailer before they arrive, so you know exactly where not to park

On the inside of the house, take down any wall art or mirrors on the top floor. The vibration from crews walking and dropping bundles is real, and frames do fall.
The tear-off itself needs no City of Calgary building permit for a like-for-like shingle replacement with no structural work, so there is no inspector visit to plan around. If your roof involves a material change, say from asphalt shingles to metal or tile, confirm with the City whether a permit applies before work starts.

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.