Asphalt Shingles vs. Metal Roofing: What Each Option Costs You

Comparing Two Common Roofing Materials

When your roof shows its age, you face a decision that will affect your home for decades. Two of the most popular options are asphalt shingles and metal roofing. Each has a different upfront price, different maintenance needs, and a different lifespan. Understanding the trade-offs helps you choose what fits your budget and your home.

Asphalt Shingles: Affordable Up Front, but Watch the Clock

Asphalt shingles are the most widely used roofing material in North America. They consist of a fiberglass or organic mat coated with asphalt and topped with mineral granules. They are lightweight, come in many colors, and are relatively easy to install. For many homeowners, the lower initial cost makes them the obvious choice.

However, that lower price comes with a shorter service life. Most asphalt shingle roofs last between 15 and 25 years, depending on climate and installation quality. In hot Tulsa summers, the sun can accelerate the breakdown of the asphalt, causing the shingles to curl, crack, or lose granules. Wind can lift and tear them, especially during severe storms. Once the shingles start to deteriorate, leaks become more likely, and the roof may need repairs or replacement sooner than expected.

Metal Roofing: Higher Initial Investment, Longer Return

Metal roofing has grown in popularity for its durability and modern appearance. Common materials include steel with a protective coating, aluminum, and copper. A properly installed metal roof can last 40 to 70 years, far outlasting asphalt shingles. It resists fire, hail, and high winds better than many other materials. It also sheds snow and rain efficiently, reducing the risk of ice dams or standing water.

The catch is the higher upfront cost. Metal panels cost more than asphalt shingles, and installation requires specialized skills and tools. The metal also expands and contracts with temperature changes, so proper fasteners and underlayment are essential. If the metal is not installed correctly, it can develop leaks at the seams or fasteners. It can also dent from hail or fallen branches, though many coatings hide minor damage well.

How the Materials Affect Roof Repair Cost

Repair cost is not just about the price of materials. It also depends on how easy the roof is to fix when something goes wrong. Asphalt shingles are relatively simple to repair: a damaged shingle can be removed and replaced without special tools. A roofer can often patch a small leak quickly. But because shingles have a shorter lifespan, repairs become more frequent as the roof ages. Over 20 years, you may pay for several repairs that add up.

Metal roofing, by contrast, usually requires fewer repairs over its life. The material is more durable, and the panels are less likely to suffer damage from everyday weather. However, when a metal roof does need repair, the job can be more complex. A dented panel may need to be replaced, and matching the color or finish can be difficult if the roof is several years old. Seams and fasteners also require careful attention to maintain the waterproof seal. These factors can make each individual repair more expensive than a shingle repair.

Total Cost Over Time: Rethinking the Numbers

When you compare asphalt shingles and metal roofing, the initial price difference is only part of the story. A metal roof may cost two to three times as much to install, but it can last two or three times as long. If you plan to stay in your home for many years, the metal roof might save you money in the long run because you avoid a second or third roof replacement. On the other hand, if you expect to move within a decade, the lower upfront cost of asphalt shingles makes more sense. The next owner will deal with the replacement.

Another factor is the roof replacement cost. Even if you choose asphalt shingles now, you will likely face a roof replacement cost in 15 to 25 years. That second replacement can be a significant expense, especially if material prices have risen. Metal roofing delays that expense by decades. For some homeowners, paying more now to avoid a big bill later is the smarter financial move.

Climate and Weather Considerations in Tulsa

Tulsa experiences hot summers, occasional hailstorms, and strong winds from thunderstorms. These conditions affect both roofing materials. Asphalt shingles can soften and become more brittle in extreme heat, while metal expands and contracts. Hail can dent metal and fracture asphalt shingles. Wind can lift shingles that are not well fastened, and metal panels can peel back if the fasteners are not rated for high winds. When you compare the two, metal roofing generally holds up better against the elements, but only if installed with the proper clips and fasteners for your area. Asphalt shingles can also perform well if you choose a high-quality product and ensure the roof deck is solid and the ventilation is adequate.

Maintenance and Upkeep

Every roof needs periodic inspection and cleaning. Asphalt shingles can lose granules over time, and the granules can clog gutters. Debris that collects on the roof can trap moisture and accelerate decay. Metal roofs need the coating inspected for scratches or chipping, because exposed steel can rust. Both materials benefit from trimming overhanging branches to reduce debris and shade. A simple visual check from the ground, or a walk around the roof edge if it is safe, can catch problems early. For any work on the roof itself, a qualified professional should handle it to avoid injury or damage.

Which One Fits Your Situation?

There is no single right answer. The choice depends on your budget, how long you plan to stay, and how much maintenance you are willing to do. If you need a new roof right now and the budget is tight, asphalt shingles give you a solid, time-tested option. If you can afford the higher upfront cost and want a roof that will last with minimal repairs, metal roofing is worth the investment. A good contractor can help you understand the specific costs for your home, including the condition of the roof deck and the complexity of the roofline. They can also advise on local building codes and wind ratings that might affect your decision.

Final Advice

Before making a decision, get several estimates from licensed roofers in your area. Ask about the materials they recommend and why. Look at examples of their previous work, especially roofs that are a few years old. And remember that the cheapest bid is not always the best value. A well-installed roof, whether asphalt shingles or metal, will protect your home and give you peace of mind. The roof replacement cost you pay now should reflect the quality of materials and workmanship, not just the lowest number.

In the end, both asphalt shingles and metal roofing have their place. The right choice for your home depends on your priorities. Understand the costs, both immediate and long-term, and you will make a decision that serves you well for years to come.