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## Telltale Signs From Above

A few unmistakable signs that something's not quite right overhead are: stained ceiling tiles, incessant water drips, or in worst cases—all-out floods. And even with these signs, there's no guarantee that the water is coming from a failed roofing system. Plumbing or piping flaws, water heaters with corroded tanks, and weaknesses in HVAC waterproofing can be the culprits. So how do you know when a leak is a roofing leak? And if it is the roof, how do you know if you need a quick patch or a whole new system installed?



One of the first clues that a roofing technician looks for to determine whether a leak is originating from the roof is to find out if the water is coming directly from the roof *decking*. This pretty much rules out plumbing, but not HVAC units. The next step is to climb up on the roof and investigate from the “point of entry.” A qualified roofing technician knows what signs to look for on any roofing system. On an EPDM application, the leak could stem from a membrane puncture the size of a pinhole; on a TPO roof the problem could be a cold weld; on PVC systems it could be a myriad of irregular circle cracks. On any fairly good roof, though, the problem can be narrowed down (more often than not) within a short period time. But on a bad roof ...

Here’s the thing with roofs that have seen their fair share of seasons. They begin to break down. And by the time water enters your building, your roofing system has likely been vulnerable for a substantial amount of time. And, as we all know, moisture over an extended period of time supports the growth of mold. When a roofing technician is called on a leak, the first thing that’s established once the first foot comes off of the ladder is the quality—or “life”—of the roof. Discoloration, vegetation, pooling water, soft spots, a slew of old repairs, and weakened or thinning membranes are all signs that we’re standing on a bad roof. For building occupants, a crucial sign that you have a bad roof is repeated water entry in *different* areas of the ceiling. But there’s nothing better than having a qualified roofing technician set foot on the roof. A technician will be able to tell you if a permanent roof repair will withstand the test of time, or if precipitation will simply find another weakness in the system (and on a bad roof, water doesn’t have to look very far). If it’s the latter, there could be serious consequences for not replacing the whole roof entirely. Good advice from an expert can be the difference between a dry ceiling and a total roof collapse.

So follow the signs, and if at all possible document them. And then let a roofing professional follow his or her signs. Together, any and all roofing troubles can be stopped, for good.

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