How to Inspect Your Roof for Hail and Wind Damage

After a severe storm, the first thing many homeowners want to do is check their roof for damage. Hail and high winds can leave behind problems that, if left unattended, lead to leaks, structural issues, and costly repairs. But climbing onto a slippery, debris-covered roof right after a storm is dangerous. This article walks you through a safe, methodical way to inspect your roof for hail and wind damage from the ground, using just your eyes and a few simple tools.

Start with a Ground-Level Walk Around

Before you even think about a ladder, take a slow walk around your house. Stand at each side of the building and look up at the roofline, gutters, and downspouts. You are looking for obvious signs that something has hit or pulled at the roof. A pair of binoculars helps here, letting you see detail from a safe distance.

What to watch for:

- Missing or lifted shingles. Wind can peel shingles off like a banana skin, leaving exposed underlayment.
- Dents or dimples in metal roofs or in the flashing around chimneys and vents. Hail leaves small, round depressions.
- Granules from asphalt shingles in the gutter or on the ground. A lot of loose granules means the shingle surface has been blasted by hail.
- Dented gutters and downspouts. If the gutters look like they have been hit by a golf ball, the roof took the same beating.
- Sections of the roof that look wavy or uneven. Wind can lift the decking itself in extreme cases.

Make notes or take photos of anything you see. This record helps if you later file a claim with homeowners insurance. Many policies require you to document damage soon after the storm.

Inspect the Attic from Inside

The attic is one of the best places to spot roof damage without going outside. On a sunny day after the storm, go into your attic with a flashlight. Look for daylight coming through the roof sheathing. Any beam of light means there is a hole or a gap. Also feel for dampness on the

underside of the roof deck or on the insulation. Water stains, even if dry now, show where water has entered before.

What to watch for:

- Cracked or broken rafters. Wind can twist the roof structure enough to snap a truss member.
- Damp or stained insulation. If you can see water marks on the attic floor, water has already penetrated.
- Mold or mildew smell. A musty odor often means moisture has been trapped inside the roof assembly for a while.

If you find any of these, mark the spot with tape so you can show a professional later. Do not try to patch a hole from inside unless it is an emergency leak; the repair needs to happen on the roof surface.

Move to the Exterior: Ladder Work

Only after you have done a ground check and an attic inspection should you consider a ladder. Even then, keep safety first. Use a stable ladder on level ground, have someone hold it, and never step onto the roof if it is wet or steep. If you feel unsure at any point, stop and call a roofing contractor. No inspection is worth a fall.

Once you are at the eaves, you can check the first few rows of shingles or the edge of a metal panel. Look for cracks, splits, or granule loss on asphalt shingles. On metal roofs, look for dents that have broken the paint or the protective coating. Even a small dent can turn into a rust spot over time. Also check the sealant around vents, pipes, and the chimney. Hail can crack sealant, leaving a path for water.

Do not walk on the roof unless you are trained and comfortable. A visual from the ladder is often enough. If you must walk, wear soft-soled shoes and stay on the steeper parts only if necessary. Many homeowners prefer to skip this step and hire a pro, which is perfectly reasonable.

Check the Flashing and Valleys

Flashing is the metal or rubber material that seals the joints where the roof meets a wall, chimney, or skylight. Wind can peel flashing away from the wall, creating a gap that funnels water into the roof deck. Valleys, the V-shaped channels where two roof slopes meet, are also vulnerable. Debris or hail can clog them or damage the metal liner, causing water to back up under the shingles.

From the ladder or with binoculars, look for flashing that is loose, curled, or missing. In valleys, check for debris piles that could trap water. If you see any separation or damage, note it for repair. A quick fix like applying roof cement might not hold in the next storm; a professional should re-flash or repair the valley properly.

Don't Forget the Roof's Accessories

Your roof is not just shingles and decking. It includes vents, pipes, skylights, and sometimes solar panels. Hail and wind can damage these, too. Check skylights for cracks or seal failure. Look at vent pipes for loosened collars or missing caps. Solar panels can be cracked by large hail, and wind can lift them if they are not securely fastened. If you have any of these, inspect them visually from the ground or ladder. If a skylight is cracked, water can enter quickly. Do not walk on a skylight to cover it; call a roofer instead.

For homeowners in Arkansas, where severe storms are common, regular post-storm checks are a smart habit. The local climate means roofs face both high winds and hail frequently. Knowing what to look for helps you act fast. Many homeowners insurance policies require you to report damage within a certain window, so a prompt inspection matters. If you need information on local roofing contractors or want to see examples of storm damage, you can find resources at sites.google.com that cover roof inspection tips for the area.

When to Call a Professional

If you spot any of the issues described here, or if you cannot safely see the whole roof, call a licensed roofing contractor. They have the training, equipment, and insurance to work at height. They can also identify damage that is not obvious, such as hail impact that has weakened shingles without breaking them. A professional inspection often costs a small fee, but it can catch problems before they become major leaks.

Remember that some damage is not visible from the ground or even from a ladder. Wind can lift shingles just enough to break the seal, then flatten them back down. Hail can create hairline cracks in metal that only show up when it rains. A roofer knows where to look and how to test for weakness. For serious storms, it is worth having a pro do a full inspection once a year, especially before winter.

You can also find helpful checklists and storm preparation guides on sites.google.com that many roofing professionals recommend to their customers. These resources give you a clearer picture of what to expect after a storm and how to document damage for your insurance adjuster.

Final Practical Tips

- Always inspect after a storm, even if you think the roof is fine. Delayed damage can get worse.
- Keep gutters clean. Blocked gutters make wind damage more likely because water cannot drain.
- Photograph everything. Your insurance adjuster will want to see the condition before any repair work starts.
- Do not attempt temporary fixes like tarps or roofing cement unless you are safe and confident. A bad patch can cause more damage.

Checking your roof for hail and wind damage does not have to be a dangerous job. By starting from the ground, using your attic as a lookout, and knowing when to bring in a professional, you can protect your home without taking unnecessary risks. A little caution and a careful eye go a long way toward keeping your roof sound through the next storm season.