

The Truth About Warranties

Doug Myer 5/11/2018

Let's face it, a new roof is a big investment, and one that we all hope will last for years. But nothing sours your customer experience like finding out your warranty doesn't cover what you thought it did.

So, before you sign on the dotted line, read, compare and negotiate your warranties to fully understand your rights and responsibilities. But before diving into the fine print, here's a quick guide to get you started on the right foot.

Warranties Are Not Insurance

We purchase insurance as a form of financial protection. Warranties actually perform a different purpose. Warranties are a defined set of guidelines that bind the issuing company to what they will do, and what they won't – protecting themselves as well as the customer. These documents should clearly state what they will cover, and establish fair limits to the company's liabilities. It makes sense that a company will only warrant what they can control; therefore a roofing panel manufacturer may offer a durability or finish warranty for their product, but must include limitations for delivery, storage or installation errors. Be aware that some warranties are clearly better than others; there are fair warranties and those that are effectively worthless to the customer, so be sure to read all the fine print. If the warranty doesn't back the product fairly, maybe you need to look for another product with a warranty that will.

Warranty Types

There are product warranties from the manufacturers, and there are installation or workmanship warranties that are issued by the contractors, and both are vital for roofing or building projects. Many people believe that just because the manufacturer of their roofing material has a 40-year warranty, their roof is "covered". Do you know what the stated 40-year protection means? Do you know exactly what is covered? Do you know who is really standing behind those promises? Let's break down the types of warranties and what they cover:

Product Warranty

A product warranty is a warranty on the manufactured product itself, NOT the final installation. Again, this is a case of standing behind what you can control -- this being the product itself meeting the aesthetic, design and engineering specifications as described. A product warranty does NOT cover the installation, because the product company has no control over that. In fact, most product warranties are voided because of installation errors by unqualified installers.

Within product warranties, you may see two types of warranty offerings – Full Coverage (NDL/no dollar limit) and Prorated Coverage. Although rare, full-coverage warranties are those that offer the full value replacement for the stated length of time within the warranty. For instance, if your warranty is for 10 years and you have a claim in year 9, you would be given the full value of your claim. Even "full-coverage" can have different interpretations. Some companies may define full coverage as the original cost paid when installed, while others will use current fair-market value. A more common coverage is called Prorated Coverage. This means that as the years go by, your coverage reduces in value until it reaches 0% at the end of the specified warranty period. So, if you have a 10-year policy, and have a claim in year 9, you would only receive 10% of your established value. The terms on prorated warranties vary widely, so read carefully to know what is truly covered, and for how long. The products themselves may carry warranties from other component

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manufacturers, such as metal roofing panels which usually carry a finish warranty from a coil coating production facility. A paint failure claim would actually be filed with the coil supplier, rather than the panel manufacturer. A trustworthy manufacturer or supplier will be transparent about these warranties and offer the name and warranty information from the original warrantor for review.

The Workmanship Warranty

While many may place great importance on the product warranty, it is actually the workmanship warranty that is your most important protection, and one that is regularly overlooked. Inevitably, should you have a claim on your roof, the issue will come down to installation failures, rather than the products themselves.

Your roofer, contractor or builder should offer an installation or workmanship warranty, to stand behind their work. While it provides another element of protection for you, it also limits the liability of the installer, defining what they will and won't do, and how long they will offer coverage. **This is the most important coverage you will need on a building or roofing project, so read the coverage and exclusions carefully while making your contractor decision.**

Most commonly, a workmanship warranty extends for a period of one to two years. But according to the gathered statistics by the National Roofing Contractor Association, most installation-related failures won't show up until the sixth year. Today, some progressive contractors and installers are extending their workmanship coverage to a longer period. Some 10-year policies are being offered now, even some lifetime warranties on installation can be found. Read the clauses carefully on these warranties. Often, they stipulate that only the warranty contractor can work on your roof. If anyone else performs service on your roof (including the owner) your warranty will be voided. Invest some time in comparing contractors, examining their workmanship policies, and ensuring that they are properly bonded and insured.

Manufacturer System Warranties

Most rare of all are the system warranties, which combine product and installation protection in one policy. These types of warranties would be most commonly found on specialty products which require licensed and trained specialists to handle installation. System warranties often have workmanship components that are very regulated, and limited to one to two years.

Warranties Come First

Researching warranties can take some time and due diligence on your part. The time to think about warranties is well before starting your project, and not when you're ready to sign the contract. Review and compare product and workmanship warranties, checking on owner-conditions within the warranty; determine what can void the warranty, and keep up with all requirements such as annual inspections or service. Ask questions and clarifications from the issuers. If the wording is vague, and can't be explained, back away. Weigh the warranties heavily in your product and contractor choices. Remember, price-shopping may provide an immediate up-front benefit, but it is quickly forgotten; a warranty decision has lasting consequences that could affect your property liability for years to come.

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Resources:

www.iurinroofing.com/typical-roof-warranty-coverage-explained/

www.choiceroofcontractors.com/the-truth-about-commercial-roof-warranties/

www.proremodeler.com/roofing-warranties-straightening-out-confusion/

www.highlandroof.com/services/warranty/

www.angieslist.com/articles/what-does-your-roof-warranty-cover.htm

www.porch.com/advice/roofing-warranty/

www.classicmetalroofingsystems.com/understanding-roof-warranties/

www.buildings.com/article-details/articleid/16881/title/is-your-roof-warranty-really-protecting-you-/viewall/true