

SKIPPING ATTIC INSPECTIONS IS RISKY BUSINESS



WITHOUT AN ASSESSMENT OF THE VENTILATION CONDITIONS INSIDE THE ATTIC THE CONTRACTOR IS ONLY “MAKING ASSUMPTIONS”



By: Paul Scelsi, Marketing Communications Manager at Air Vent Inc.

It's hot in the attic. Getting inside the attic can be tricky. And navigating around is not always easy. But skipping an attic inspection prior to installing a new roof could result in a costly callback; possibly a brand new roof paid for by the roofing contractor. That's what happened to Pond Roofing Company, Fairfax, VA.

During our best practices in residential attic ventilation seminars for roofing professionals each first quarter across North America, we recommend doing an attic inspection. Whenever it is safe and practical to do so, it's wise to look around inside the attic for signs of moisture, incorrectly ducted bathroom fans, attic exhaust vents without actual holes in the roof deck, and blocked intake vents. Pond Roofing normally always does attic inspections. But one time, Pond Roofing skipped.

During the estimating process for a new roof, Pond Roofing made the following attic ventilation

recommendation to the homeowner:

- Block the existing two gable louvers (exhaust vents on each end of the side of the house) and install a roof-mount power fan equipped with both a thermostat (to help fight heat buildup) and humidistat (to help fight moisture buildup). The power fan would be a significant exhaust ventilation improvement compared to gable louvers which limit the exhaust airflow primarily to the very side ends of the attic.

The intake ventilation already in place was fully vented vinyl soffit panels which appeared to be plentiful to supply the power fan with needed airflow. The homeowner approved the estimate; and in the summer Pond Roofing installed the new roof in accordance with the proposed attic ventilation recommendations.

Call Back

By the winter, the homeowner was calling Pond Roofing concerned.



During the callback investigation, Pond Roofing found the insulation packed against the plywood near eaves inside the attic and multiple signs of excessive moisture.)

"The homeowner said it felt like all of the heated air for the upstairs was being sucked up into the attic, saying it was freezing upstairs," said Patrick Readyhough, president of Pond Roofing Company. "That's what triggered our investigation."

Readyhough went inside the attic and quickly spotted soaked plywood. And on the roof-top side, there was water actually weeping out from between the shingles, that's how much moisture was present. Back inside the attic he noticed the insulation was pushed up against the plywood at the eave, in effect blocking the intake airflow.

"So we had no intake airflow from the soffit to the attic exhaust fan," said Readyhough. "I told the homeowner we missed something. We need to get it corrected. So we installed new plywood, new underlayment, new shingles...a brand new roof," said Readyhough without hesitating to do the right thing during the callback.

Why it was Skipped

Why did the estimator skip the attic inspection? He allowed the homeowner to take charge.

"We have a process and we have a system. We do attic inspections. This customer was running behind (with his personal schedule) and he let my estimator get off his game and he rushed him," said Readyhough. "The customer didn't even let him inside the house or attic."

"So a couple of mistakes were made. One, not demanding that we do an attic inspection was the first mistake. The second mistake was the fact that the vented vinyl soffit was installed over solid soffit. There were no airflow openings. Had the estimator done his attic inspection and noticed the insulation packed against the plywood near the soffit, he would have told the homeowner that we're going to remove the bottom row of plywood so we can insert attic

insulation baffles to unblock the vinyl soffit. We do that all the time. Then, on the day of installation, our field supervisor would have been on the scene to see, 'Wait a second. It's solid wood behind the vented vinyl soffit. It's not venting anyway. We need a new plan.'"

The new plan Pond Roofing pursued was to install roof-top intake (The Edge Vent) to offset the non-functioning vinyl soffit, insert insulation baffles in the rafter bays to keep the insulation from blocking the intake airflow, and switching from the roof-mount power fan to ShingleVent II ridge vent for exhaust.

Looking back, Readyhough wishes the estimator either rescheduled the estimate so he could have time to inspect the attic or politely insist the attic inspection must happen today. "Homeowner, I cannot give you this proposal until I take a look inside the attic. Otherwise, we're making assumptions," Readyhough plays out aloud how the conversation should have gone that day.

"You can't let your customer run your show. You're there as an expert. They've asked you to come as an expert. You have to be able to stand up for yourself and say, 'Hey, I'm the expert. I need to look at a few things. If we cannot do it now let's please reschedule.' We learned a valuable lesson there," Readyhough said.

Corrective Action for the Future

One of the positives to come out of this learning experience is some tweaks to the process that Pond Roofing uses.

"We have new CRM (customer relationship manager) software created by Contractors Cloud. I worked with the company to customize the workflows to create a gateway requirement at the roof measurement stage," said Readyhough. "It requires the estimator to tag a photo(s) from inside the attic and document notes from the attic inspection. Without satisfying this

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Steep Slope

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requirement the system will not generate an estimate for the roof. It causes people to stop and think and make sure they've followed all of the right steps."

Readyhough has also started using new estimating software that includes templates with intake ventilation options and exhaust ventilation options already built in. It's already populated with the options. So, instead of having to remember what attic ventilation intake and exhaust vents to add, the estimator simply decides which intake and exhaust vents will not be used. "It's a better fail-safe, checklist for us," said Readyhough.

Readyhough encourages fellow roofing contractors

Use this attic inspection form to identify potential problems with the attic ventilation system.

STYLE OF ROOF		EXTERIOR INSPECTION	
Basic gable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total Length of Horizontal Ridge: _____	
Basic hip	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total Length of Diagonal Hips: _____	
Lots of gables	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Signs of damage from inadequate ventilation	
Lots of hips	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Warped, buckled roof deck	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Cut-up	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Heat, moisture damage to shingles; curling, cracking, fish mouting	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
EXISTING EXHAUST VENTS		• Soffits; peeling paint, signs of leaking from roof	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<small>Note: Avoid mixing two different types of exhaust vents on the same roof of a common attic.</small>		• Problems with ice dams in the winter months	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Ridge Vents _____ and/or Hip Ridge Vents _____		• Icicles at edge of roof in winter	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Roof Louvers _____		• Uneven snow melt on roof	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Power Fan(s) _____		• Gutter damage from ice dams	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Wind Turbines _____		INTERIOR INSPECTION	
Gable Louvers _____		Square footage of attic: _____	
SIZE & NUMBER OF INTAKE VENTS		• Blockage of intake vents (insulation, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
The Edge™ Vent _____		• Signs of leaks on attic ceiling	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Vented Drip Edge _____		• Signs of damage from inadequate ventilation	
Continuous Soffit _____		• Moisture damage	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8" x 16" undercave _____		• Rust, dirt on exposed nails	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6" x 16" undercave _____		• Compacted attic insulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4" x 16" undercave _____		• Mold, mildew in the attic	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		• Blackened plywood	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Air Vent's Attic Ventilation Inspection Checklist help identify potential trouble spots inside the attic and along the exterior of the house/roof.

to establish a formal process for estimating roofs which includes attic inspections and sticking to the process. "Every part of your business should have a process but especially the estimating portion of your

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business,” he said. “And you really need a way to hold your estimators accountable for doing the steps in the process and the results of those steps. And you need to make sure you do not let the customer run your show. You’ve got your system. You’re the professional. Here’s what I need to do. Set the expectations and then follow through. I can’t emphasize this enough. It’s key.”

Paul Scelsi is marketing communications manager at Air Vent Inc. and leader of its Attic Ventilation: Ask the Expert™ in-person seminars (airvent.com). He hosts the podcast, “Airing it out with Air Vent,” and he’s the chairman the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association Ventilation Task Force. He is the author of the book, Grab and Hold Their Attention: Creating and Delivering Presentations that Move Your Audience to Action.



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