Roofers

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What They Do

Roofers attach a variety of materials to the roofs of buildings to ensure they are watertight so that buildings and their contents are protected. Wood shingles are a traditional choice, but more and more, other materials such as asphalt (composition) and tile are chosen by homeowners. Most commercial structures still use "hot mop" roofs to cover flat or low-pitched roofs.

Roofers both patch or repair roofs and replace them. Techniques are similar for both tasks. The roofer inspects the roof to determine if the roof can be repaired or if the damage is so extensive that the entire roof needs to be replaced.

Sometimes old roofing material needs to be removed in order to comply with building codes or because the damage extends down to the roof deck (the wood sheathing that supports the roofing material). The roofer then prepares the roof surface, and nails or staples new material to the roof.

Tasks

- Fasten composition shingles or sheets to roof with asphalt, cement, or nails.
- Cut roofing paper to size and nail or staple paper to roof in overlapping strips to form base for roofing materials.
- Clean and maintain equipment.
- Remove snow, water, or debris from roofs prior to applying roofing materials.
- Insulate, soundproof, and seal buildings with foam, using spray gun, air compressor, and heater.
- Punch holes in slate, tile, terra-cotta, or wooden shingles, using punch and hammer.
- Apply gravel or pebbles over top layer, using rake or stiff-bristled broom.
- Apply alternate layers of hot asphalt or tar and roofing paper until roof covering is completed as specified.
- Overlap successive layers of roofing material, determining distance of overlap, using chalkline, gauge on shingling hatchet, or lines on shingles.
- Cut strips of flashing and fit them into angles formed by walls, vents, and intersecting roof surfaces.

*Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.*

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Roofers

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- Building and Construction — Knowledge of materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads.
- Mechanical — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.
- Equipment Selection — Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- Operation and Control — Controlling operations of equipment or systems.
- Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- Installation — Installing equipment, machines, wiring, or programs to meet specifications.
- Gross Body Equilibrium — The ability to keep or regain your body balance or stay upright when in an unstable position.
- Static Strength — The ability to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.
- Stamina — The ability to exert yourself physically over long periods of time without getting winded or out of breath.
- Extent Flexibility — The ability to bend, stretch, twist, or reach with your body, arms, and/or legs.
- Manual Dexterity — The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
- Explosive Strength — The ability to use short bursts of muscle force to propel oneself (as in jumping or sprinting), or to throw an object.
- Multilimb Coordination — The ability to coordinate two or more limbs (for example, two arms, two legs, or one leg and one arm) while sitting, standing, or lying down. It does not involve performing the activities while the whole body is in motion.
- Trunk Strength — The ability to use your abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without 'giving out' or fatiguing.

Work Environment

Roofers may work in dry or wet weather, though their functions differ depending upon the outside weather conditions. For instance, they are sometimes called upon to fix leaky roofs in the pouring rain. Besides being unpleasant, working on a wet roof can be dangerous because roofs may be very slippery.

For the most part, though, Roofers work on dry roofs. In California, most replacement roofing work is done in the dry season. This means that Roofers work when it is sunny and warm or hot. Temperatures on a roof can be much higher than on the ground since there is little if any shade, and the roofing materials themselves can become quite warm. A composition shingle roof, for example, is generally made of fiberglass and asphalt, a tar-like substance, which can heat up quickly and become very warm. And working on a flat roof that is "hot mopped," involving the use of molten tar, is even hotter. It is important for Roofers to drink plenty of liquids to avoid suffering heat-related illnesses.

Other hazards include falling off a roof or ladder or being injured by heavy construction equipment including cranes, trucks, and loaders. Roofers may also be exposed to burns from hot tar, kettles, and buckets.

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Roofers

The work of a Roofer is physically demanding. Roofers often must carry heavy bundles of wood or asphalt shingle roofing along a roof, and sometimes up and down a ladder. They usually spend hours on a roof, bending over to staple roofing felt (tar paper), cutting shingles, and nailing or stapling shingles to the roof deck.

Most Roofers work a 40-hour workweek unless construction deadlines have to be met or for emergency repairs. They may work nights or weekends depending on the job or extent of repair.

Some roofers are members of the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers, and Allied Workers.

California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Roofers				
47-2181	23,400	28,800	1,080	$14.43 to $22.85

Wages do not reflect self-employment.
***Average annual openings** include new jobs plus net replacements.*
Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Roofing is a trade that has not changed very much in the past 100 years. Materials have improved but the work still requires the same skills. Roofers work both in new and existing construction so the employment opportunities are less dependent upon new construction.

Employment in this occupation will grow much faster than the average for all California jobs. With the population exploding in California, the demand for Roofers will continue to be strong through 2014. This strong demand will not be significantly affected by the economy, since having a rain-tight roof is not something homeowners or business owners can put off indefinitely.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Roofers usually follow one of the following training paths:

- Formal, four-year apprenticeship
- Vocational school
- Community college programs or certificates
- Extensive on-the-job training

Most Roofers learn the trade through on-the-job training. New Roofers start by assisting experienced workers with roof tearoffs, cleaning and preparing the roof deck, carrying and stacking materials, and moving ladders. Since Roofers work off the ground, sometimes several stories up, safety is an important aspect of their training. California's Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Apprenticeship Standards oversees apprenticeship programs in the state.

Some Roofers learn the trade through a formal apprenticeship program offered through local roofing contractors and a local union. The apprenticeship program involves a combination of classroom and on-the-job instruction.

Roofers

Most employers seek Roofers with a high school diploma. They also look for workers who are familiar with hand and power tools and have the ability to do basic problem solving.

Recommended High School Course Work
High school preparation should include courses in shop, basic mathematics, blueprint reading, and English.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Application at a jobsite is one way of finding a job. The occupation has a higher turnover rate than many other construction trades so finding a job can be somewhat easier.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following construction industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- Managing Offices
- New Multifamily Housing
- New Single-Family Housing
- Offices of Bank Holding Companies
- Offices of Other Holding Companies
- Residential Remodelers

For local listings of contractors, search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- Building Contractors, Commercial/Industrial
- Building Contractors, General
- Roofing

Where Can The Job Lead?

Larger firms may offer promotional opportunities for Roofers. Increasing skill levels can lead to higher pay and responsibility within a firm. Some Roofers get a contractor's license from the California Department of Consumer Affairs, Contractors State License Board and start their own business. The ability to use a variety of roofing materials such as asphalt, tile, or wood shingles can mean that more jobs will open up for the journey-level Roofer.

Other Sources of Information

National Roofing Contractors Association
www.nrca.net

United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers, and Allied Workers
www.unionroofers.org

California Department of Consumer Affairs, Contractors State License Board
www.cslb.ca.gov

California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Apprenticeship Standards
www.dir.ca.gov/das

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