

# RECYCLING RATES OF RESIDENTIAL ROOFING MATERIALS



## RECYCLABILITY OF ROOFING MATERIALS: WHY METAL LEADS THE WAY

When it comes to sustainability, not all roofing materials are created equal. Many homeowners don't realize that the type of roof they choose can have a significant environmental impact—especially when it comes to recyclability and landfill waste.

Asphalt shingles are the most commonly used roofing material in North America, but they are also among the least sustainable. Despite claims of recyclability, less than 10% of old asphalt shingles actually get recycled. The rest—millions of tons annually—end up in landfills, where they can take hundreds of years to break down. Additionally, asphalt shingles are petroleum-based, meaning their production contributes to carbon emissions and fossil fuel dependence.

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The United States generates 13 million tons of asphalt shingle waste every year from both manufacturing and roof tear-offs. Despite being the most common roofing material, only about 10% of this waste is actually recycled, according to Business Insider. The rest ends up in landfills, where it can take up to 400 years to fully decompose. Given the sheer volume of waste, asphalt's overall negative environmental impact is considered high.



Concrete tiles are recyclable and can be repurposed in new concrete production. While they have the potential for reuse, the overall recycling rate for concrete remains low. Additionally, the quality of the recycled material can impact how much can be effectively reintegrated into new products. Despite these challenges, recycling concrete tiles helps reduce waste and supports more sustainable construction practices.



Wood shake roofing has a low recycling rate due to the lack of formal recycling centers that accept it. While wood is a natural material, old shakes are often treated with preservatives, stains, or fire retardants, making them unsuitable for reuse. Some untreated wood shakes can be repurposed as mulch or biofuel, but most end up in landfills due to the absence of widespread recycling programs. This limited recyclability makes wood shake roofing a less sustainable option compared to materials like metal.



Slate roofing is valued for its natural beauty and longevity, and while it is 100% recyclable, reusing slate comes with challenges. Recycled slate roofs can be less durable than those made with virgin slate, as older tiles may have weakened over time. Additionally, the process of recycling and reinstalling slate can be complex, often requiring specialized expertise. Finding a contractor experienced in working with recycled slate can be difficult, and matching old roofing materials is nearly impossible, which can impact the final appearance.



Unlike other materials, metal roofing is infinitely recyclable. In fact, most new metal roofing contains a significant percentage of recycled content—sometimes up to 95%. When a metal roof reaches the end of its long lifespan (often 40-70+ years), it doesn't go to waste. Instead, it can be fully recycled and repurposed without degrading in quality. In fact, metal recycling is very common and typically part of the roofing contractors removal process. Recycling used metal roofing is simple and recycling programs are very easy to find throughout the U.S. and Canada.

For those looking to reduce environmental impact while investing in a long-lasting, high-performance roof, metal roofing is the most responsible choice. Unlike other roofing materials, metal roofing supports a circular economy—keeping materials out of waste streams and in use for generations. In addition, a quality metal roof is energy efficient, solar ready, durable, provides superior protection, and is easy to maintain, making it the superior choice for homeowners looking to make an eco-friendly investment.

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