



WARNING : ROOF CLEANING SERVICES

The Trading Standards Service regularly receive complaints about various unsatisfactory home improvement work; one such area of growing complaint is associated with roof cleaning services. We have taken advice from experts and roof tile manufacturers to highlight some of the misconceptions associated with these services.

Longevity of a roof tiles

Different roof covering materials have different longevities and their longevities are governed by varying factors depending on tile type, it is however accepted that the majority of UK manufactured tiles are fit for purpose for at least a **minimum** of 60 years.

Moss and lichen on roof tiles – is it really a problem?

Lichens, mould and similar growths although considered by some to be unsightly are not generally detrimental to the longevity of a roof tile.

These growths flourish given the right conditions and it is therefore not surprising that a roof tile with an ideal aggregate surface finish has a tendency to attract and support them. It is only in circumstances where these growths are interfering with the free drainage of rainwater off the roof slope should there be any cause for concern. In these circumstances it may be necessary to clean the roof tiles using a suitable, regulated biocide and a wire brush, or a low pressure wash.

High pressure washing roof tiles – is there cause for concern?

Roofing experts warn that roof tiles should not be subjected to high-pressure washing or jet washing for many reasons which include:

- Removal of Lichen and moss by jet washing will invariably remove the granular surface finish and potentially damage the structural integrity of the tile, this process followed by a surface treatment application would invariably invalidate any tile manufacturer's guarantee.
- Interlocking roof tiles are not designed to be walked upon, foot traffic can cause these interlocks to break opening the roof up to water ingress.
- Inappropriate pressure washing can potentially force water up between the tiles and roofing felt into the roof space. Bedded mortar and flashings can also be blasted off using this method, potentially leading to further costs for rectification.

Unsubstantiated claims

We have also been advised that roof cleaning services have made a number of claims which to date are largely unsubstantiated by an independent expert/source, these include energy saving benefits due to the reduction in thermal loss through the roof tile and fungicidal washes that prevent the re-growth of lichen and moss growths.

What should it cost?

Often 'rogue traders' will state the cost of a new roof as being 10 to 15 thousand pounds however, in reality, for an average size property it should be in the region of 4 to 6 thousand pounds. They will use this falsely high quote to then make you think their service is a good deal.

How does the law protect me?

A fraud by false representations is an offence under the Fraud Act 2006, an example of this would include being given a false and vastly over estimated price for a new roof or for work to be rectified in an attempt to frighten you into having their service carried out or claiming that a product will only be available for a limited time to pressure a sale.

In addition to this, The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 prohibits unfair commercial practices towards consumers. This includes:

- A general ban on conduct below a level consumers are entitled to expect from a professionally diligent trader.
- Misleading practices, like false or deceptive statements, or leaving out important information.
- Aggressive sales techniques that use harassment, coercion or undue influence.

In appropriate circumstances the Trading Standards Service can take Court action against traders found to be charging consumers for professional services but failing to adopt professionally diligent standards of work.

How should I choose a reputable trader?

- Dudley Trading Standards Division and Age UK Dudley have put together a list of reputable trades people within a booklet called 'Fix-a-Home' which is available to you free of charge by calling 01384 814695
- Always get at least three written quotes, do not pay in advance and get a written receipt for any money paid
- Get everything written down - don't rely on spoken agreements
- Don't buy from the first trader who comes to your door or be rushed in to making a quick decision - seek quotes from reputable local traders

The elderly and vulnerable are particularly, although not exclusively, vulnerable to this type of scams. If you are aware of one of these companies operating in your area please call us on our confidential Bogus Caller hotline 01384 812045.