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[Repair That Leaking Flat Roof With Commercial Roofing Contractor In Chicago](#)

by Charlie and Hannah - May 24th, 2013.
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Most commercial buildings have a flat roof type design that is either completely flat or slightly pitched, known as low-pitch roofs. Because of their horizontal nature, as opposed to steeper pitched roofs that are found on most residential homes, flat pitched roofs are prone to leaking because water collects on the surface. This problem is typically exacerbated during winter months with amounts of snow and ice melting on roof tops. If your building's flat roof is holding water, you need a [commercial roofing contractor in Chicago](#) to examine the structure and recommend and implement solutions.

Flat roofs are typically covered with a membrane to waterproof the roof area. The membrane allows water to run off the roof into a gutter system installed along the roof's edge line. Some roofs are actually designed to collect water to buffer rainwater. If this membrane fails, you will have a leaking problem and will need to work with a **commercial roofing contractor** in Chicago.

There are basically two different types of commercial roofs and it's important to note the problems associated with them to help determine any problems, even before you contact a commercial roofing contractor in Chicago.

By far the most common roofs are tar and gravel roofs. The main roofing structure is coated with several thick layers of hot tar, onto which a layer of gravel is added. These two elements combine to create a solid membrane of water and moisture protection. Tar and gravel roofs will need repair work done when you notice that that gravel begins to separate from the tar. The main evidence of this is when you see a residue that appears to be like sand on the surface. Other signs of trouble include blisters appearing in the asphalt, as well as evidence of any tears or cracks in the membrane. Even the appearance of algae or moss growth can suggest a moisture problem on the roof.

If you have what's called a modified bitumen flat roof, you may need repairs when you detect unbonded seams found at laps of the material or at the edges where they meet. If there are blister or wrinkles present, this may indicate the roof system was not installed correctly as the bonding of the membrane was likely not fully cured or completed. If the roof has the appearance of an alligator's skin or blisters are present, the membrane was likely overheated when it was installed. The commercial roofing contractor in Chicago should be able to help remedy the situation. In most cases such as this, a new flat roof should be installed. The contractor will remove old material right down to the bare roof deck in order to complete a full examination and to determine the extent of water damage.

On a tar and gravel roof, before any roofing work is done, you should have the contractor determine how many existing layers there are, since the more layers you add, the more weight, possibly compromising the structural integrity of the roof. In some older sections of Chicago, it's not uncommon to find up to five layers on a flat roof, which equates to about two tons of material. It would be dangerous to try and add another layer, so it's a good idea to check and be certain before any work is started.

One final note, skylights are actually one of the leading sources of leaks, since rain water and snow can be forced into the skylight's frame that lacks the proper membrane and metal flashing to prevent leaks. If you have skylights, they should be inspected carefully by a qualified commercial roofing contractor.

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