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Technical Advisory Bulletin

To: GAF Residential Sales, GAF Contractors, Field Services, CARE
From: Technical Services
No: TAB-R-176

Vented and Unvented Attics FAQs

Does Building Code Require That An Attic Be Vented?

A building can have a vented or unvented attic. The International Residential Code (IRC) provides code requirements for both vented and unvented attics, refer to Chapter 8–Roof-Ceiling Construction.

What Are GAF's Recommendations for Attic Ventilation?

GAF offers information on proper ventilation in Technical Advisory Bulletin TAB-R-120 and that the vented attic conforms to local code requirements.

Also, GAF highly recommends attics be ventilated in areas where there has been a history of ice forming along the eaves. A properly vented attic is very effective in controlling and minimizing ice dams. Refer to TAB-R-116 for more information on the cause of ice dams and preventative measures you can take with GAF products.

What Is An Unvented Attic?

An unvented attic, often referred to as a sealed-off roof, does not have any ventilation openings and the thermal, moisture and air control layers are located at the roof deck, such as with a cathedral ceiling (a.k.a., a compact roof system).

Keep in mind that unvented attics may be either “conditioned” or “unconditioned” spaces. A conditioned space is a space that is directly (or indirectly) heated and/or cooled.

Are There Problems with Unvented Attics?

If not properly designed and constructed, unvented attics may lead to condensation problems, mold growth, deck deterioration, damage of asphalt shingles, and structural damage.

Asphalt shingles installed over unvented attics are often exposed to higher temperatures, compared to vented attics. This increase in temperatures can age and/or oxidize the shingles and sealing strips faster, which may affect the performance of the shingles.

If mechanical equipment and ductwork are located in an unvented attic, the issues associated with this practice may be of less concern; however, moisture can still accumulate in the space and there is no way to remove it. A viable solution is to make the unvented attic a conditioned space.

*Does Installing
Spray-In-Placed
Foam Under The
Roof Deck Make My
Attic Unvented?*

Sprayed-in-place foam applied directly to the bottom side of a roof deck may not allow for airflow like in a traditional vented attic assembly, but that alone does not convert the attic into an unvented space in retrofit situations. All existing vents need to be removed and/or closed off.

Important note: There are rigorous building code requirements for unvented attics. If converting a vented attic to an unvented one, it is important to follow all code requirements and the foam manufacturer's recommendations installing an unvented attic assembly.

*What effect does
installation over an
unvented deck have
on my GAF Limited
Warranty?*

None of GAF's limited warranties are voided, even if the shingles are installed over an unvented deck. However, any damage caused by installation over an unvented attic, or lack of ventilation more broadly, is excluded from coverage under the terms and conditions of GAF's limited warranties.

Questions?

GAF Residential Consumer Services can assist you with these and other questions you may have. Residential Consumer Services can be contacted at 877-423-7663. The GAF website is a great resource for just about any question you may have or for additional information you may require. Please visit www.gaf.com to find the latest information on our products and their installation.

Important: This document supersedes any prior GAF Technical Advisory Bulletins on this topic. Please always check www.gaf.com to make sure you have the most up to date information.