The 8 Factors that Influence the Cost of a Metal Roof

Over the nearly 40 years I have been in the roofing business, the #1 question I have been asked is: “How much does a metal roof cost?”

There are many variables that impact the cost of any roof, not just a metal roof. You can look at the upfront cost or the cost per year over time. I have concluded that there is a price tag for everything and the savvy homeowner who is considering a metal roof deserves to know what that price tag is. It is a question that can be answered and this article will give you that answer.

In nearly every category of goods that Consumers consider purchasing, there are many options and lots of choices. Some are well worth the expense, and some are not. But they still have value to different buyers. There is always something to suit all needs and tastes, and it comes down to what you want.

And the same goes with metal roofs. You can buy an “entry level” metal roof, an “investment grade” metal roof, and anything in between. In some cases, your product selection may have to do with your personal tastes and dreams, and in other cases, it may have to do with the design of your home. In some cases, it simply ends up being budget-driven.

The answer to the “How much does it cost?” question, then, depends upon whether you’re talking entry level, investment grade, or someplace in between. So, we’ll start by looking at decision components to examine the attributes and factors that will inform your options and choices, which will help quantify the true cost of a metal roof.
The 8 Factors That Influence the Cost of a Metal Roof

1. Fasteners and Interlocks
Some metal roofs have exposed screw heads and some have all concealed fasteners. The products with concealed fasteners use more metal per square foot and they also require more intricate and slower equipment for production. Concealed fastener products are slower to install due to the way the panels must be fitted. Exposed fastener products just overlap on the edges whereas concealed fastener products have actual interlocks on two if not all four sides. All of these things mean that exposed fastener products are less costly than concealed fasteners. But, they also have high maintenance and durability concerns as the fasteners loosen and leak over time. Concealed fastener products are known for greater strength, wind resistance, and durability over time.

2. Metals
Common metals available are steel and aluminum. Less common metals include copper and zinc. The previous order of the metals also reflects their cost from lowest to highest. The steel products are typically available in two versions, one with a corrosion-resistant coating that is primarily aluminum and the other with a corrosion-resistant coating that is primarily zinc. The zinc coatings, called galvanized, offer greater sacrificial qualities for performance on cut edges and scratches through the paint surface. Aluminum products are lower weight than steel and naturally rust-resistant. Copper and zinc are used unpainted for their distinctive “natural metal” beauty.
3. Coatings

Many homeowners opt for the “natural steel” look of clear-coated steel that also has a zinc and/or aluminum coating on it. This is the “entry level” end of vertical panel metal roofing. The clear coating is a very low-end finish that wears away after about 5 – 7 years of weather exposure. The purpose of the coating is to protect the metal from damage during roll forming, transportation, and installation – not to provide significant life expectancy for the roof.

Aggregate or stone coatings are also available on some lower cost steel shingles. These coatings are beautiful, but their textured surface has been known to hold “roof algae” in certain environments – the dark streaks and stains that you see on asphalt shingles. The stone coatings can wear away over time similar to asphalt shingles and also can cause problems with recyclability of the metal.

Colored paint finishes start with various polyester chemistries including “super” and “siliconized” polyesters. The higher-grade versions of these utilize superior pigmentation but, once the polyester resin begins to break down (which usually begins in earnest around year seven), the pigment is more exposed to ultraviolet light and chalk and fade ensue. Ultimately, paint finishes do wear away but can be recoated down the road; depending upon the chemistry, the coatings on most painted metal roofs will have an “erosion” period of 30 – 60+ years.

The highest grade paint finish available on higher end vertical panel and metal shingle roofs is a PVDF finish, marketed under the trade names of Kynar 500 and Hylar 5000. While even these coatings can still develop dark streaks in dirty environments, they offer the greatest overall durability and fade and chalk resistance of any paint finishes and, hence, are the most costly commercially-available finishes.
4. Styles
Residential metal roofs are available in two basic styles – vertical seam and modular panel. Amongst those variations, you will find differences in terms of exposed and concealed fasteners, as well as how the panels interlock. Most vertical seam panels are available in steel and aluminum as well as in the specialty copper and zinc metals.

Vertical seam panels range from exposed fastener “agricultural” panels to high-end architectural standing seams. While standing seam panels have concealed fasteners, those fasteners may be driven through clips which allow full movement of the metal panels for thermal expansion and contraction or they may be through “nail hems” which have more limited movement similar to vinyl and metal siding.

Modular panels are available in a variety of looks including shingle, shake, slate, and tile. While many of these panels have concealed fasteners and interlocks on all sides, it's critical that you understand exactly what you're getting because some do not, and it makes a big difference in terms of cost and also performance.

The “entry level” exposed fastener corrugated panels are at the lowest price, followed by the nail hem standing seam, and then true standing seam and modular panels which will carry similar price tags. There are, of course, price variations based on metals and coatings.
5. Roof Configuration
There are two significant things to consider when it comes to the configuration of your roof. Very low pitch roofs are a concern and very complex rooflines merit extra consideration.

Modular panels are never appropriate for roofs under 3:12 pitch. For roofs under 2:12 pitch, rarely is anything except a mechanically seamed standing seam metal roof appropriate. These roofs are crimped shut for extra water tightness at low pitches.

As far as roof geometry, the more complex the roof is, the more time consuming it will be to install. One thing to keep in mind is that a huge shortage of construction laborers exists, and costs keep increasing. For complicated roofs, it can make sense to invest now in a product that will not require maintenance or replacement in order to avoid escalating labor costs.

If your roof has valleys, it is important to look for a metal roof system that has an “open” or “self-cleaning” valley system that will not clog with debris or ice and snow. These valley systems carry water on top of the roof system rather than on hidden channels beneath the roof’s surface. Additionally, when considering a metal roof, think about how much water your roof carries. Do upper-level roofs drop water onto lower roofs? How long are your rafter lengths? These questions can be particularly critical for vertical seam metal roofs because those roofs will carry water in between the seams of long panels which can flood out under extraordinary demand.
6. Ventilation
While, unlike some products, metal roofs generally do not have their lives shortened by improperly vented attics, re-roofing your home is always the appropriate time to think about attic ventilation. Metal roofs generally adapt well to most types of attic exhaust vents. Proper attic ventilation helps with energy efficiency by exhausting gained heat from the sun back to the outside. Good attic ventilation is also key to avoiding winter ice dams in northern climates. Finally, a well-ventilated attic is a dry attic and a dry attic will be an attic without mold and with effective moisture-free insulation.

7. Warranties
When you purchase a metal roof, you will receive two warranties. One will be from the manufacturer or supplier covering the product and the other will be from your contractor covering the installation workmanship. It is important to receive both in writing before you make a decision. You will find that “investment grade” metal roofs have more comprehensive warranties. Here are specific things to analyze both your product warranty and your contractor warranty:

- Length Of Coverage
- Transferability – How Many Times?
- Is it Non-Prorated?
- Exclusions
- Maximum Coverage
- Wind Warranty
- Hail Warranty
- Fade And Chalk Warranty
- Stability Of Company Behind The Warranty
8. **Installation**

While the above seven factors are all variables for which the homeowner can determine what is best for them and their home, Installation is not a variable factor in my opinion. An improperly installed metal roof will be an ongoing nightmare. I hear this from homeowners each and every day who contact me through [www.asktoddmillner.com](http://www.asktoddmillner.com). Installation is never the place to skimp or cut corners, not with an “entry level” metal roof and not with an “investment grade” metal roof.

When choosing an installer, here’s a general rule of thumb – if you’re talking to an installer who cannot show you with photos and great specificity how every flashing area on your roof will be handled, look for another installer. Otherwise, pay attention to how they show you that pipes, electrical conduits, skylights, solar tubes, sidewalls, chimneys, ridges, hips, gables, valleys, and eaves will be flashed. Does what they show you make sense? Does it carry water on top of the roof rather than in hidden channels that will clog with debris? Does it have minimal dependence on sealants? Are there areas where sealants can be replaced or covered instead with metal?

My other major word of advice on contractor selection is that you get what you pay for in most cases. Larger companies, which have greater resources and typically greater stability, also have greater overhead and will have higher prices than contractors working out of their trucks.

For extra assurance in choosing a contractor, refer to [44 Questions To Ask Your Contractor](#) or feel free to [email me](#) with details on your contractor and concerns that you have. You do not want to short-change the performance of your roof investment with an inferior installation.
How Much Does a Metal Roof Cost?
As you have seen above, there are 8 Factors That Determine Your decisions on the 8 Factors will influence the total cost of the roof. There can be a significant difference between “entry level” and “investment grade.”

it’s been my observation that the typical metal roof purchaser will spend about the same on a roof as they would spend if they were buying the new car of their choice. But, the metal roof retains its value over time and doesn’t need to be replaced in 4 – 6 years.
Metal Roofing: Cost Per Square Foot
Because I do not know how big your roof is, I am basing my prices on the
delivered cost per square foot of roof space. One common mistake in figuring
this is forgetting that your roof is much larger than the square footage of your
home’s living space footprint. The square footage of roof space also takes into
consideration the size of non-living space under your roof such as garages,
porches, and overhangs, and also the pitch of the roof.

Here’s what to expect for the cost of a metal roof installed by a quality
contractor. The price ranges will cover some variations between particular
brands and styles, the complexity level of most roofs, as well as other factors
including the size and stability of the installation contractor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roofing Material</th>
<th>Price Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposed Fastener Corrugated Roofing</td>
<td>$3.50 - $6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail Hem Standing Seam</td>
<td>$6.00 - $9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clip Fastened Steel Standing Seam</td>
<td>$8.00 - $11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Builder Grade” Steel Shingles Including Stone-Coated Products</td>
<td>$9.00 - $14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Investment Grade” Steel Shingles</td>
<td>$10.00 - $15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminum Shingles</td>
<td>$14.00 - $19.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clip Fastened Aluminum Standing Seam</td>
<td>$15.00 - $20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Roofing</td>
<td>$20.00 - $25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc Roofing</td>
<td>$22.00 - $27.00</td>
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Please contact me if you ever have any questions in figuring out cost
estimates on your metal roof.
WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

A decision for a metal roof is a big investment and one that you do not want to get wrong. Use my nearly 40 years of experience to guide you to the best possible choice. My step-by-step advice on buying a metal roof is as follows:

☐ Read Ask Todd Miller as much as possible, watch my videos, listen to my podcasts, and check out my answers to various questions.

☐ Watch the Metal Roofing 101 video series.

☐ Download my free ebook on “How To Buy A Metal Roof” in order to understand terminology and important factors.

☐ Use the free online Roofing Needs Profiler to determine whether an “entry level,” “mid-grade,” or “investment grade” metal roof is most appropriate for you and your home.

☐ Use a free Online Visualizer Tool to see what your home would look like with various metal roof styles and colors.

Classic Metal Roofing Systems
Kassel & Irons
Green American Home

☐ Choose the product and manufacturer you like best and then ask them for the contractor in your area whom they would trust to install their own roof. You can contact an Isaiah Industries brand here, and a guide to hiring a roofing contractor here.
A Free Roofing Coach

And finally, if you wish, allow me to be your free Roofing Coach to analyze your roofing needs.

Todd Miller, President
Isaiah Industries, Inc.