Shingles get all the attention, but the wood underneath is what actually holds a roof together. The deck, usually plywood, OSB, or on very old homes plank sheathing, carries the weight of snow, workers, and the roofing itself. When it rots, the problem hides under a perfectly normal-looking surface. In Huntington, with its humid summers, nor'easters, and shaded lots full of mature oaks and maples, deck rot is a real concern ahead of any full roof replacement. These five signs can help you spot trouble early.

1. Sagging or Soft Spots in the Roofline

Stand across the street from your house in Huntington village or Centerport and look along the ridge and the planes of the roof. A healthy roof reads as straight and flat. Dips, waves, or a belly between rafters suggest the deck is losing strength.

Do not climb up to test it. Soft decking can give way underfoot. Instead, check from the ground with binoculars, or from the attic if it is safely accessible.

What it means

Moisture has likely been getting in for a long time, slowly weakening the panels or planks. Left alone, the sag can grow until shingles crack and leaks become active.

2. Water Stains, Dark Streaks, or Musty Smells in the Attic

The attic tells the truth about the roof. Look at the underside of the deck with a flashlight, especially around:

- Chimneys and plumbing vent pipes
- Valleys where two roof planes meet
- Skylights and dormers
- Bathroom fan exhaust points

Dark rings, delaminated plywood layers, black staining, or a persistent musty odor point to repeated wetting. Rot often begins near these penetrations because flashing fails there first.

Older Capes and Victorians in Northport and Huntington Station sometimes have thin, aged sheathing boards with gaps. Staining on boards that touch the roof edge can indicate years of slow seepage.

3. Shingles That Look Wavy, Cupped, or Loose

Shingles that lift, ripple, or fasten poorly to the surface are often a symptom rather than the cause. When the deck beneath is damp or deteriorated, nails lose their grip and the surface moves.

Watch for:

1. Nail heads backing out and pushing up through shingles
2. Shingles that crack when walked on by an inspector
3. Ripples that follow the pattern of panel seams
4. Granule-free zones near the eaves

Individually, any of these might be an age issue. Together, they raise the odds that the deck needs attention during replacement.

4. Recurring Moss, Algae, or Moisture at the Eaves

Shaded north-facing slopes under heavy tree canopy hold moisture longer. Moss lifts shingle edges and can trap water against the deck. Harbor-area homes in Lloyd Harbor, Cold Spring Harbor, and Huntington Bay also deal with salt-laden humidity that keeps surfaces damp.

Ice dams after a hard winter are another culprit. When meltwater backs up under shingles at the eaves, it soaks the first few feet of decking. Eave edges are among the most common places contractors find rot when the old roof comes off.

5. Daylight, Pests, or Damaged Fascia

If you can see light through the attic boards, water can get through too. Likewise, signs of insects or rodents often point to damp, softened wood that is easier to chew or nest in. Peeling paint, spongy fascia boards, or rot in rake trim are also clues that moisture has been traveling into the roof edge.

How Much Rot Is Typical?

Most full replacements turn up at least a little deck damage, but how much varies widely. The table below summarizes common situations; figures are rough and illustrative only, and actual pricing depends on your contractor and materials.

Condition Found at Tear-Off Typical Scope Rough Cost Impact Deck in good shape Spot nailing only Minimal A handful of damaged sheets Replace individual panels Modest, often priced per sheet Widespread rot near eaves or valleys Replace large sections Noticeable added cost Extensive structural damage Rafter repair, full re-decking Substantial; may need engineer input

Ask any contractor you consult how deck repairs will be priced. A per-sheet or per-foot rate written into the contract avoids disputes. Speaking with a qualified provider of Long Island Exterior Co. can also help you understand how unit pricing for decking is usually handled in your area.

Why It Matters for Replacement Timing

Installing new shingles over compromised decking is like painting over mold. New fasteners cannot hold in crumbling wood, and the manufacturer's warranty may not cover problems caused by a poor substrate. A complete tear-off lets the crew see every inch of the deck and fix problems before the new underlayment goes down.

That is also why overlay jobs, laying new shingles over old, are risky on any house with suspected moisture issues.

What You Can Do Now

- Check your attic after the next heavy rain or snowmelt
- Photograph stains and note where they are
- Clear debris from gutters and valleys
- Have a licensed professional inspect before the roof reaches the end of its expected life
- Confirm permit requirements with the Town of Huntington Building Department if you live in an unincorporated hamlet, or with your village building department if you live in an incorporated village

such as Northport or Lloyd Harbor

Final Thought

Deck rot rarely announces itself. The signs are subtle, but they are readable if you know where to look. Catching them before a leak turns into ceiling damage is almost always cheaper than waiting.

roofing contractor Huntington NY

About the Author

Marcus T. is a home exterior writer with a background in residential roofing and building maintenance topics. He writes practical guides that help homeowners understand what is happening under their shingles.