



An Extended Guide · No. 1539

Common Roof-Mount Problems

Warning signs you can
spot from the ground

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! Read this first — this is professional, on-the-roof work

Putting solar on a roof is expert, permitted work — not a weekend project. It means drilling into your roof and sealing every hole against water for decades, or setting heavy ballast your roof has to carry, all while working at a height where a fall can be deadly and around wiring that is live whenever the sun is up. This guide is here to help you understand and judge that work — so you can hire the right people and ask good questions — not to walk you up a ladder to do it yourself. For any roof-mounted system, use a licensed, insured, properly credentialed solar installer, make sure the required permit and inspection actually happen, and protect your roof's warranty before the first hole is drilled. And please don't climb up to inspect or adjust anything yourself — the roof is their job, not yours. This guide is about the warning signs you can notice safely from the ground after a system has been installed — not about getting up there yourself to look closer.

Most problems announce themselves quietly

A well-installed roof mount is meant to be nearly invisible — no drips, no odd noises, no surprises. When something does go wrong, it almost always leaves a small, ground-level clue long before it becomes a big deal. This guide is about learning to notice those clues.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. Folks call me when something about their solar doesn't look or feel right and they aren't sure what to do next. Almost every time, the answer is refreshingly simple: notice it, write it down, and call the people who installed it.

This is not a guide about fixing anything yourself. It's about learning what to watch for from your yard or your driveway, so a small issue gets handled while it's still small — instead of turning into a bigger repair, or a longer argument about who's responsible.

★ You aren't expected to diagnose anything

You just need to notice that something changed and make a phone call. I'm glad to help you think through what you're seeing and who to call first — reach me anytime at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll know exactly what to watch for and exactly what to do about it.

- ❑ Most roof-mount problems show up as a small, noticeable change you can see or hear from the ground — not something hidden.
- ❑ Watch for ceiling stains, lifted or loose flashing, a drop in production, birds or nesting sounds, rattling in the wind, and roof streaking.
- ❑ Catching a sign early almost always means a smaller, simpler fix — water and wear are patient, not forgiving.
- ❑ Most repairs are covered by the installer's workmanship warranty. The first call goes to them, not a roofer you find on your own.
- ❑ Never climb up to look closer yourself. A phone call does the same job, safely.
- ❑ A simple record of what you noticed and when helps any warranty claim go smoothly.

✓ Read it in any order

Skip straight to the sign you're worried about, or read straight through — either way you'll have what you need.

Why noticing early is worth the trouble

None of these signs demand a dramatic reaction. What they reward is a prompt one.

Water and wear are patient. A little moisture finding its way past a disturbed flashing edge, or a fastener working slowly loose in the wind, doesn't announce itself all at once. Left alone, a small sign quietly becomes a bigger repair — a stain becomes rot, a rattle becomes a real loose panel, a small production dip becomes a bigger one.

Caught early, almost all of this is routine: a call, a visit from your installer, and a repair under warranty. That's the whole point of this guide — not to worry you, but to help you notice sooner rather than later.

★ A little vigilance goes a long way

You don't need to inspect anything. You just need to notice when something looks, sounds, or reads differently than it used to, and make the call. That's genuinely the whole skill.

A stain on the ceiling, or a new leak

This is the sign that gets the most attention, and for good reason — it usually means water is finding its way in somewhere it shouldn't.

A new stain, especially in a room or attic space under where the array sits, is worth taking seriously. It doesn't necessarily mean anything dramatic — often it traces back to a single attachment point where the waterproofing needs attention — but it's exactly the kind of thing to report rather than watch.

The fix is almost never about the panels themselves. It's about the seal at the roof. Understanding what that waterproofing is supposed to look like, and why it matters so much, is the whole subject of our guide on flashing and leak prevention — worth a read if you want the fuller picture.

! Don't wait it out

A stain can take a long while to show up after water first starts getting in, which means it's already been happening for a while by the time you notice it. Report a new stain promptly rather than watching to see if it gets worse.

Flashing that looks lifted, curled, or out of place

You can often spot this one from a safe distance, with a pair of binoculars or a zoomed-in photo, without going anywhere near the roof yourself.

Flashing is the metal piece tucked under the surrounding roofing at each attachment point, and it's designed to shed water over the hole instead of into it. Wind, ice, age, or a less-than-careful original install can leave an edge lifted or a piece sitting slightly out of place.

This is squarely the topic of our flashing guide, and it bears repeating here: the waterproofing is the single most important detail in the whole mounting system. If something looks disturbed, it's worth a call even before you see a stain inside.

✓ Binoculars, not a ladder

A pair of binoculars or the zoom on your phone's camera, used from the yard, tells you plenty. Save the close-up look for your installer, who has the training and the fall protection to do it safely.

When your system seems to be making less power

If your installer set you up with a monitoring app, it's one of the most useful tools you have for noticing a problem before you'd ever see or hear one.

A little day-to-day variation is normal — cloud cover and the season change how much a system produces. What's worth reporting is a real, sustained drop that doesn't match the weather — production that stays low on plenty of sunny days in a row.

There are several general reasons a drop can happen — a loose connection, an issue with the module-level electronics under a panel, or something new casting shade on part of the array. Your installer can narrow it down; your job is simply to notice and report the pattern.

! Never touch rooftop wiring yourself

Solar wiring on the roof is energized whenever it's daylight, even during an outage. A production drop is never a reason to go looking at connections yourself — that's licensed-electrician territory, every time.

Scratching, cooing, or droppings under the array

The same open gap that helps panels breathe and drain also looks like a fine, sheltered spot to a bird or a squirrel.

Scratching or cooing sounds, especially at the edges of the roofline, along with streaks of droppings below the array, are classic signs that something has moved into the space under your panels. It's a common and very fixable problem, not a sign of a bad install.

Our guide on keeping critters out from under your panels covers this in full, including the guard that solves it — a simple barrier fitted around the array's perimeter. Worth a look whether you already have a problem or just want to head one off.

✓ It's worth mentioning even if it seems minor

Nesting material and droppings can affect drainage and, over time, wiring — so it's worth a call even if the birds don't seem to be doing any obvious harm yet.

A new rattle or hum when the wind picks up

A securely mounted array is normally a quiet one, even in a stiff Ohio wind. A new sound is worth paying attention to.

A rattle, a buzz, or a hum that shows up specifically when the wind gusts often points to a clamp, a fastener, or a piece of flashing that has worked slightly loose. It doesn't necessarily mean anything is about to fail — but it does mean something has changed, and that's worth reporting.

As with everything in this guide, your role is simply to notice the sound and describe it — when it happens, how loud, whether it comes from one area or seems general. Your installer can take it from there.

★ Trust your ears

You know how your own roof normally sounds in the wind better than anyone. If something's new, it's worth a call — there's no such thing as bothering me with a question like that.

Streaking or discoloration you notice on the roof

This is the trickiest sign on the list, because roofs naturally weather and streak over time whether or not solar is involved.

Some staining and streaking is simply ordinary roof aging — algae, dust, or runoff patterns that would happen with or without an array. What's worth a mention is streaking that's new, that follows the lines of the mounting system, or that shows up not long after an install.

You aren't expected to tell the difference yourself, and honestly, most homeowners can't — and shouldn't try to, from up close. A professional look can sort out ordinary weathering from something tied to the array.

✓ When in doubt, mention it

There's no downside to describing what you're seeing to your installer or roofer and asking whether it's worth a look. The worst outcome is being told it's nothing to worry about.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Keeping watch for these signs looks a little different depending on how many roofs you're watching and how easy they are to see.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, you're usually watching one roof, on one house, that you can see clearly from your own yard or the street. A stain on a bedroom ceiling or a sound from directly overhead is hard to miss for long.

- One roof means fewer places for a problem to hide — a walk around the house is usually enough to keep an eye on things.
- A ceiling stain typically shows up in a room you use every day, which tends to get it noticed and reported quickly.
- Neighbors, and an HOA if you have one, may notice and mention something about your roofline before you do.
- Being close to your installer's usual service area can mean a quicker visit once you call.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, you may be watching more than one roof — the house, plus a barn or outbuilding with its own array — and some of them may sit a fair distance from where you spend your day.

- A barn or shop roof you don't pass by daily is easy to under-check — make it a habit, not just a hunch.
- Watching your production through monitoring matters more when you can't eyeball a distant roof very often.
- Sound carries differently around open outbuildings, so a rattle or a nesting noise may be easier to miss than on a house roof.
- Our guide on cleaning, maintenance, and safe roof access has more on building a simple watching habit for outbuildings.

★ Not sure what you're looking at?

Whether it's one roof or several, tell me what you've noticed and we'll sort out together whether it's worth a call to your installer. Reach me at (330) 200-8042.

Who actually fixes it, and under what promise

This is the part that surprises people: fixing most of these problems usually doesn't cost you a search for the right contractor. It's already spoken for.

When a company installs panels on your roof, they typically stand behind their own work with a workmanship warranty — a separate promise from the roofing material's own warranty and separate again from the panel maker's equipment warranty. Most of the problems in this guide fall squarely under that workmanship promise.

Our guide on solar and your roof warranty walks through how these different warranties fit together, and why it's worth getting the workmanship warranty's length in writing before the first hole is ever drilled.

✓ Find that paperwork now, not later

Take a few minutes to locate your original solar paperwork and any written warranty today, before you need it. It's a much calmer errand now than during a leak.

Please don't climb up to check, even to be sure

I'll say this plainly, because it's the single most important habit in this whole guide: noticing is your job. Climbing up is never your job.

! The height and the wiring are both real risks

A fall from a roof can be life-changing, and rooftop solar wiring is energized whenever it's daylight — even for a 'quick look.' Neither risk gets smaller because you're only curious, not doing repair work. Leave the roof to insured professionals every time.

It can be tempting to just take a peek, especially if a problem feels minor. But a homeowner without fall protection or training faces the exact same danger as anyone else up there — the roof doesn't know the difference between an inspection and a repair.

A phone call accomplishes the same thing a climb would, without the risk. Describe what you noticed, and let your installer decide what needs an in-person look.

★ This one's worth repeating

If you take away one thing from this whole guide, let it be this: notice, describe, call. Never climb.

What a good installer does once you call

Knowing roughly what to expect makes the whole process feel far less uncertain.

A good installer will usually ask you a few plain questions — what you noticed, when, and whether you have any photos — and then schedule a visit, or tell you honestly that it doesn't sound urgent and can wait for a routine check. Either way, you should get a clear answer, not silence.

When they do come out, they bring the training and the fall protection to look closely and safely — something you were never meant to do yourself. Afterward, they should explain what they found in plain language, not just industry terms.

★ A slow or dismissive response is itself a sign

A responsive installer who explains things clearly is doing right by you. If you're getting the runaround, that's worth telling me about too — I can help you figure out next steps.

A simple record helps everyone move faster

You don't need anything formal — just a few notes that make the conversation with your installer quicker and clearer.

- **The date you first noticed it.** A stain, a sound, a streak — jot down roughly when it started.
- **A photo from the ground.** Of the ceiling stain, or the roofline from a safe distance — genuinely useful, and safe to take.
- **A screenshot or note from your monitoring app,** if the concern is a change in production.
- **Your original solar paperwork and any warranty documents,** kept together with these notes so they're easy to find.

✓ A phone folder works fine

A simple photo album or notes folder on your phone, labeled something like 'Solar,' is plenty. You're not writing a report — just keeping the pieces together.

When it might not be the solar's fault at all

It's fair, and common, to wonder whether a roof issue is really related to the panels or just ordinary roof aging that happened to show up around the same time.

Roofs wear on their own timeline, with or without solar on them. A stain, a streak, or a worn patch can sometimes trace back to the roofing itself rather than anything to do with the mounting system.

The fair, honest approach is to have both your roofer and your solar installer take a look, rather than assuming either one is automatically at fault. A good installer won't be defensive about that request — it's a completely reasonable one.

★ Nobody has to be the bad guy here

Most of the time, this isn't about blame — it's about figuring out what's actually happening and getting it fixed. I can help you think through who to call first.

Keep an eye out, without making it a chore

None of this requires vigilance or worry. A relaxed, occasional glance is genuinely all it takes.

An easy rhythm works well for most people: a casual look at the roofline when you're already outside, a glance at your monitoring app now and then, and noticing if anything sounds different in a windstorm. That's it — there's no schedule to keep or checklist to complete.

Our guide on cleaning, maintenance, and safe roof access covers a sensible rhythm for this in more depth, including what little upkeep the racking itself actually needs — which, done right, is not very much at all.

✓ Pair it with something you already do

Glance at the roofline when you're getting the mail or walking the dog. You don't need a separate routine — just a little awareness.

The best fix is the one you never need

Most of the signs in this guide trace back, one way or another, to decisions made on install day.

Careful flashing at every attachment, a thoughtful layout, and a critter guard considered up front all head off problems before they start. This is exactly why choosing a careful, well-reviewed installer matters so much — it shows up years later as fewer calls like the ones in this guide, not more.

If you're still in the process of choosing who does the work, it's worth reading up on what a good installer looks like before you sign anything. It's far easier to choose well up front than to sort out a problem afterward.

★ **Already have solar? This still helps**

Even if your system's long installed, knowing these signs means you're set up to catch anything early, for as long as you own the roof.

Next time you're outside, take a glance

A quick, practical list for the next time you're in the yard or pulling out of the driveway.

- ❑ The ceiling and attic space in the rooms under the array — any new stain, softness, or smell.
- ❑ The roofline itself, from a safe distance — any flashing that looks lifted, curled, or out of place.
- ❑ Your monitoring app, now and then — production trending down on otherwise sunny days.
- ❑ Sounds in a stiff wind — any new rattle, buzz, or hum.
- ❑ Streaks or droppings under the array — a sign something has moved in.

✓ None of this needs a ladder

Every single item on this list can be checked from the ground, with your own eyes and ears. That's the whole idea.

Questions worth asking when you report something

A little preparation before you call makes the conversation faster for both of you.

Q: What should I tell my installer when I call?

The date you noticed it, what it looks or sounds like, and any photos or monitoring screenshots you have — the more specific, the faster they can help.

Q: Should I call the panel maker, my installer, or my roofer?

Start with your solar installer. They installed the racking and the flashing, and most issues run through their workmanship warranty.

Q: What if my original installer is no longer in business?

Ask your roofer or another licensed local installer to take a look, and check whether a manufacturer or equipment warranty still applies.

Q: How soon should I call after I notice something?

Sooner rather than later. Treating it as a sensible priority, not an emergency or an afterthought, is exactly what keeps these things small.

★ Bring me your questions first if you'd like

If you'd rather talk it through before you call anyone, that's exactly what I'm here for — honestly, with no stake in the repair. (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions about roof-mount problems I hear most often, answered plainly.

Q: Does a rattling sound mean something is about to fail?

Not necessarily, but it usually means something has worked loose and is worth a look. Report it and let your installer judge how urgent it is.

Q: Is a little roof streaking normal?

Some staining and streaking happens on any roof over time. The honest answer is that a professional can tell you whether what you're seeing is ordinary weathering or something tied to the array.

Q: What if the birds don't seem to be causing any real harm?

Droppings and nesting material can still affect drainage and, over time, wiring — so it's worth mentioning even if it seems minor. Our critter guide covers the fix.

Q: Will reporting a problem cost me anything?

That depends on what's found and what your workmanship and equipment warranties cover. Ask your installer directly and get the answer in writing.

Q: Can I just patch a ceiling stain myself and leave it there?

Please don't paint over it and hope. Patching the ceiling without finding and fixing the source just hides the problem until it's worse.

Q: What if I'm simply not sure it's a problem at all?

Call me for a second opinion first, if you'd like. I can help you decide whether what you're seeing is worth a call to your installer.

★ Still have a question I didn't cover?

That's what I'm here for. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and ask — there's no such thing as a silly question about your own home.

Bringing it all together

Watching for trouble doesn't have to feel like a job — it's really just staying a little familiar with how your own roof normally looks and sounds.

Ceiling stains, lifted flashing, a production drop, birds underneath, a new rattle, unusual streaking — each is a small, ground-level clue. None of them require you to climb anything or diagnose anything. They just require you to notice, write it down, and call.

Most of the time, the fix runs straight through the installer's workmanship warranty, and catching it early is what keeps it simple. That's the whole spirit of this guide — less worry, more familiarity.

★ Not sure what you're seeing? Ask me first

Whether it's a stain, a sound, or just a nagging feeling something changed, I'm glad to help you think it through before you call anyone else. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made spotting and reporting roof-mount solar problems feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't climb on roofs or do the licensed solar, roofing, or electrical work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy, properly credentialed local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

From Ground Sign to Scheduled Fix

The usual path when something looks or sounds different



Most repairs run through the installer's workmanship warranty.

Ground Signs and What They Point To

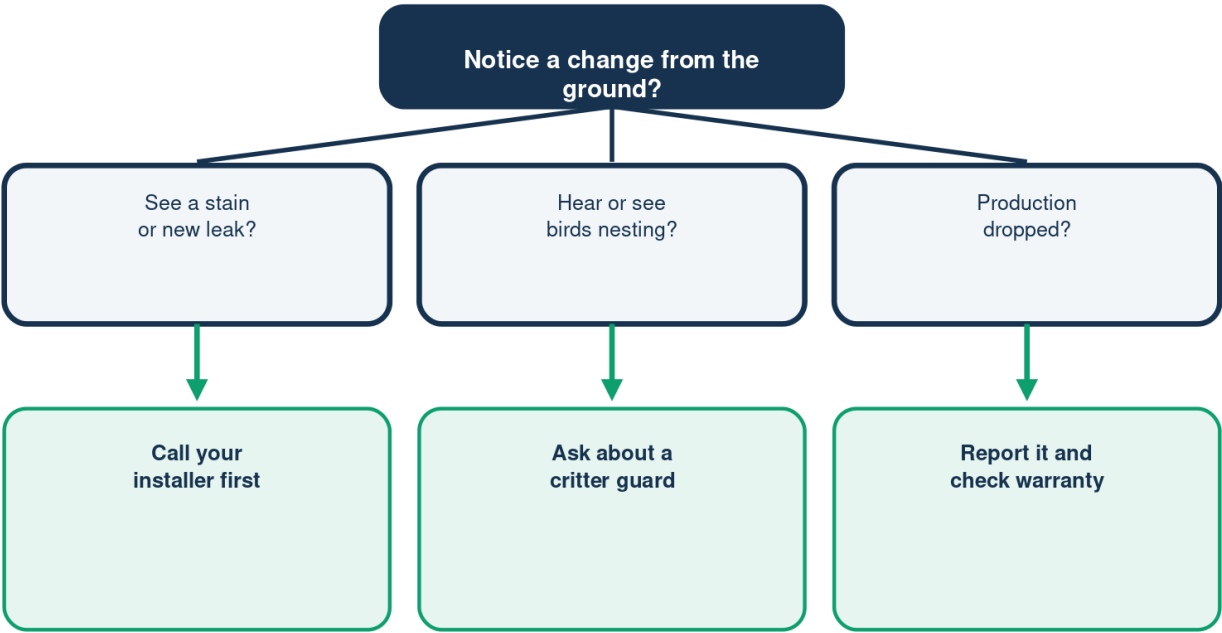
Common signs, and the general area each usually points to

Likely area	
Ceiling stain	Flashing or seal
Loose flashing	Flashing or seal
Production drop	Wiring/electronics
Bird sounds	Air gap/critters
Rattling in wind	Clamp/attachment
Roof streaking	General wear

A general guide only – your installer confirms the actual cause.

Something Doesn't Look Right?

Common signs and the sensible first move for each



Never climb up to look closer -- a phone call does the same job.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

Who Usually Handles the Fix

A rough guide to who gets the first call

	Usually handles it
Leak at attachment	Solar installer
Flashing issue	Installer or roofer
Wiring or output	Licensed electrician
Critter damage	Installer, then guard

Your installer typically coordinates the fix either way.



Need a Real Person?

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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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