Frequently Asked Questions – DECRA ROOFING TILES

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1. Why choose Decra above other similar products?

Decra is the world’s leading brand supplied by AHI Roofing of New Zealand. AHI manufactured the world’s first coated metal roof tile back in 1954 and since then, they have continued to improve on the manufacturing technology. Although there are now many copies of the Decra tile, no-one has the experience of AHI and they are unable to match the product quality, particularly when it comes the coatings and the coating technology. For example, every Decra tiles passes through an oven which is over 100 metres long. This ‘curing’ process makes sure that the coatings are all bonded and will not be erode for the life of the product. No –other manufacturer has the same quality manufacturing process.

Most metal tiles will do a good job in keeping the rain out of a house for a when they are first installed. However, a person building or buying a house will also want to know the following: How long will the roof last? Will it last in my particular environment (eg coastal) Will the colour change? Will the coatings last a long time How much maintenance will the roof need? If I have a problem in future is the warranty worth the paper its written on? If some or all of these things are important to the person, they can only be sure to get them from Decra, because independent testing and the company history shows that AHI is the only product proven to deliver all these things, on every occasion, anywhere in the world.

2. Why Zincalume better galvanized steel?

Galvanized Steel uses a Zinc coating to protect the steel, while Zincalume® uses both Zinc and Aluminum. Zincalume® has proved to be a much more durable product, with steel lasting 6 to 9 times longer when compared to standard galvanized products.

3. Why is natural stone important?

Some tile manufacturers use a stone coating, but then paint over the top. The chip coverage is often poor and the paint tends to change colour over a shorter period of time.

By using natural stones, AHI tiles will not change colour. Also the chip coverage and the bonding of the chip is generally to a much higher standard when compared to other metal tiles. This is important particularly over time because it ensures the basecoats and substrates are protected from weather damage and thus ensuring that the product looks better for much much longer.
4. Why do you use 0.4mm thickness of steel?

Over the years AHI has established that the steel used must achieve the optimum balance of strength and flexibility. We steel specification which is stringent for all AHI factories has to take these into account and we have settled on a gauge and specification that strikes the optimum balance between these factors and the final product price.

AHI produce over 25 million tiles a year through our own factories and licensees. As the world largest producer or metal roofing tiles and as the original manufacturer of such products, we like to think that we have some degree of expertise in this field.

5. Why don’t you produce a longer tile, or a wider tile?

There are certain efficiencies to be achieved, particularly when maximizing loads in shipping containers. Also steel is generally supplied on coiled rolls and this is usually most cost effective in the size purchased to make or tiles at the width that they are.

Longer tiles loose strength in the installation and also look less appealing. AHI with over 50 years experience in producing these products have settled on product sizes most suitable and desirable across their range of world markets.

6. Why don’t you make long run with stone chip coating?

Our market is roof tiles. There are plenty of manufacturers making long run roofing and we do not believe that our customers want their beautiful AHI roofs to be comparable with what is essentially an industrial use product.

These also tend to be used at the economy end of the roofing market, while our products are generally supplied at the premium end of the roofing market.

7. Why do you make in NZ?

New Zealand is the cheapest place for AHI to make our roofing products. Fletcher Building, our parent company is the largest purchaser of steel in the New Zealand market, so our purchase of the base material is very competitive. Since the cost of steel represents the largest element making up the cost of the tile, this is critically important. Also we are close to the source of other raw materials and also close to the port in Auckland so containerized exports become easy.

Since cost of labour and cost of freight together usually add only 10-15% of the landed cost in African markets, it makes this the most efficient source for us to supply from and also means that our price in African markets is kept as low as possible.
8. Why buy from an appointed distributor?

Our pricing is structured so that there is no advantage in individuals purchasing small quantities and importing themselves. Our distributor’s prices are structured so that internationally, prices remain relatively equal, with variances only according to shipping costs and local import duties and taxes.

Furthermore, our distributors are trained in product installation to insure you receive the best service. They are also authorized to issue a 50 year product warranty, issued by the manufacturer and transferable should you sell the property. No warranty is valid unless supplied by the distributor in the country of installation.

9. Can anyone install these roofs?

Although it is easier to install our roofs than many other types of roofing, there are certain key steps that need to be adhered to, which is why we recommend clients using only recommended installers who have been trained by the distributor. Otherwise, installation manuals or installation training videos are available from the distributor.

10. Does the chip coated roof collect more dust?

It is normal that in a dusty environment ALL roofs will collect dust and dull the colour. Our roofs are no different to other roofs in this respect and will be easily restored after rains.

11. Is Rain Noise greater on your roofs?

You tend to find that the timber used under our installations absorbs a lot of the residual rain noise. When the tile is installed, it is firm and there is very little reverberation like that experienced with long run metal roofs.

The stone chip also reduces rain noise further, so when compared with concrete or clay roofs, the rain noise is only measurably higher by a 10-12%, whereas a long run sheet will create some 30-40% higher noise levels.

The difference of AHI roofs compared to a concrete or clay tile roof may therefore be considered negligible.
12. Can you collect drinking water from the roof?

Drinking water collection from Decra AHI roofs is approved and certified by the WHO.

13. What about organic growth?

AHI Roofing Tiles contain a biocide in the basecoat which is harmless does not effect the WHO approval for drinking water collection, but will prevent the build up off moss or algae for the first 5-8 years following installation. After this period, any organic growth will depend on the location and environment and will be the same for AHI roofs, or roofs from other manufacturers.

On AHI roofs, this organic growth can be killed with a sodium hypochlorite, dilute to a working concentration of available chlorine of 3% and apply liberally to the roof. After rainfall the growth should clear.

14. Can we get different colours?

The tiles are made from natural rock so mostly we are limited to those colours. When we want to use a colour that does not occur naturally, (e.g. blue chip), then the chips are individually ceramicly coated with the required colour. These are kiln fired to endure that the colour will last and therefore carry the same warranty against colour change as the natural rock colours.

If the client wants a colour not currently in our range, to do this efficiently, we need a large production run, so orders are limited to those exceeding 30,000 tiles. If the client just wishes to have a different blend of chip colours from the existing range, then this can be accommodated with a minimum run of 5000 tiles. Any extra product produced will have to be also taken by the customer.

15. Why is Shingle more expensive?

The shingle tile is pressed in a 4 directional corrugation. It is a slow process to get this right. The tile is also covered in 2 colours of stone chip. The additional cost of the shingle therefore relates to a greater manufacturing cost when compared to the normal Heritage, Classic, or Shake profiles.

16. How do I know the warranty will be honoured by the manufacturer?

AHI have been established for over 50 years and we are suppliers to over 90 countries around the world. We are the worlds biggest steel tile supplier, more than 4 times bigger than our nearest rival. We are also owned by Fletcher Building, one of New Zealands biggest
companies. If we did not stand by our warranty the cost would be much too high a price to bear by the company.

This ensures that we are very confident that the product will last past the terms of the warranty any-where in the world. If for example the tiles were used in a very dry inland environment, we might expect them to last over 150 years, but the warranty that we give is to cover the tiles even in the worlds most aggressive coastal environments.

17. Why does the local distributor not guarantee instead of the manufacturer?
Many companies offer a local guarantee, but then they close after a few years and set up again under another company name. Because the warranty for Decra is from the manufacturer, who have been around for over 50 years, you can be sure that the warranty from them is of a greater value.

18. Why do you offer only a small discount?
When you purchase Decra Tiles, you can be confident that you are getting the best product in the world of its type. This means that the component parts and the cost of manufacture will be higher than products supplied by other manufacturers. AHI insist that we offer a fair price to our customers, so we do not first give a very high price and a big discount, instead we give a fair price to begin with. The customer then has the chance to decide if they want to buy a cheaper product and then have to spend money in the future on maintenance and replacement; or, buy Decra Tiles which might cost a little more, but offer the best VALUE to the customer in the mid-long term.

19. What makes your nails so expensive and why can’t I use locally bought nails?
Decra Tiles are very strong. They are designed to last a very long time. When you use an ordinary nail, you might just get it through 1 tile without the nail bending, but to get it through two tiles and into the roof frame, you will probably use 3 or 4 nails for every one that you get through. Decra nails are made especially strong not only to piece the tiles, but also to ensure that they do not rust or corrode for the life of the roof, which as we know is 50 years. No other nails offer a 50 year warranty.

20. If I have a gypsum ceiling, would I need insulation?
A gypsum ceiling will certainly help to reduce the heat entering a building, but the heat in the roof cavity or attic will continue to build up while the sun is shining. This is caused by the suns radiant heat and the air temperature in the roof can be much higher than the outside air. A Gypsum ceiling will also heat up and store heat which then radiates into the building, even after the sun has gone down. The purpose of using roof insulation is to stop the radiant heat even entering the attic space, so it cannot radiate down into the rest of the building. In a room that is air conditioned, your air conditioner is working continuously against radiant heat. That is why
when you turn off an air conditioner the room heats up again very quickly. By using insulation you are preventing the radiant heat entering so you save a lot of money on electricity by running the air conditioner a lower power, since it is no longer fighting continuously against new radiant heat.

21. How do AHI roofs withstand an earthquake?

In an earthquake there is a lot of vibration. Concrete or clay tiles which are fixed individually and are very heavy will tend to shake a lot during an earthquake. Once they start to fall, it creates a domino effect and there are many tragic cases around the world where people are killed because their roof collapses. Decra Tiles first of all are very light. They are only 15% the weight of a concrete tile. Secondly each tile is fixed into the roof frame and then to the 4 adjacent tiles surrounding it. This in effect makes the roof one complete structure, so even if the walls of the building underneath collapse, the roof is likely to stay intact in one piece.

22. Is a metal roof tile hotter in summer and colder in winter?

When we talk about the heat of the roof, we usually are referring to its effect on the ambient temperature inside a building.

On a very hot day, the metal roof might be a bit hotter to touch than a clay roof tile, but it will not store heat in the same way as concrete or clay. Therefore, over a given day, the amount of heat that is generated from the roof is not very different between a Metal Decra Tile and a clay tile. In any case, inevitably there is a ceiling between the roof and the rooms, so the overall radiant heat temperature in the roof cavity is what’s important. To keep this down, we would always recommend some form of roof insulation whether it is a metal roof or a concrete/clay tile roof.

On a cold day, no matter what the material, the roof will not be contributing to the internal environmental temperature.

23. Is a Decra Roof always more expensive?

Normally you would expect to pay a higher price for something of better quality. Because Decra used the highest quality component parts and because the manufacturing and coating process is more advanced than any of the copycat products, it costs more to make a Decra tile. But if you work out how long a Decra Tile will last without replacement or maintenance, then you find that over the life of the product, a Decra Tiles actually costs less on average (per year of life), so it represents much better value.
24. Why is Decra ‘the ORIGINAL stone coated metal roofing tile’?

Because it is made by AHI Roofing who were the inventors of the coated metal roofing tile back in 1954. Everything else is a copy.

25. What is the recommended roof pitch for Decra Tiles?

Heritage Tiles can be installed on a pitch as low as 15 degrees, but for the other product types we recommend 18 degrees. This is to prevent the ‘ponding’ of water during heavy rain. There is no maximum or no recommended pitch, but in order to make the roof a ‘feature’ usually the pitch will be higher than 25 degrees.

26. Can I cut the tiles with a blade or angle grinder?

A guillotine is recommended, but if a Panga works and you get a straight cut, that is acceptable. We do not use angle grinders however because these can burn the coatings at the edge of the tile which will allow the exposed cut to rust. A guillotine or panga does not have the same problem.

27. Can I bend Decra Tiles?

It is recommended that Decra tiles be bent at the hip and the ridge before the flashing is attached, thereby creating a 90 degree vertical angle that prevents water penetration. Up to 90 degrees, the integrity of the steel and the coatings is guaranteed not to be damaged by bending.

28. Is it necessary to use touch up kit on the nails?

No – it’s not necessary other than for appearance. It is necessary to use touch up kit on any area of the tile that had chip loss during installation. This will protect the substrate for longer under ultraviolet light.

29. Are your tiles good for industrial use?

Decra Tiles are sometimes used on industrial buildings when the owner wants to give a higher quality appearance, but because they require batten spacing every 37cm, they are not OFTEN used on industrial structure. However, they are VERY OFTEN used for commercial structures that want to benefit from the appearance and still have the advantage of a light weight metal structure.
30. What is the gauge of your tiles?

We use the UASA gauge classification which is 26 gauge. The steel is 0.39-0.4mm thick and with the zincalume and aps acrylic it becomes about 0.43-0.44. With the stone coating it becomes more like 0.75-1.0 mm. In many ways this is not important. You might for example use a 0.55mm thick steel, but it is only galvanized, so it will last only 7 or 8 years. Even though Decra uses 0.4mm steel, it lasts 50 years, so do you want thick steel or a roof tile that lasts? 26 gauge steel gives us the optimum balance between strength and flexibility.

31. How does your warranty work if the tiles rust?

If the tiles rusts to the point that water can penetrate, AHI will pay for the replacement of the tile and the cost of the work to re-install the tiles. For the first 25 years AHI pay 100% of both costs and for the second 25 years a pro-rata share is paid. The details of this are shown in the warranty.

32. If there is organic build up on the tiles, can they be cleaned?

Yes, a chlorine mixed 5% with 95% water will kill the black fungus. This should be sprayed on the roof and washed off after two days. This should remove the black fungus and the tile is undamaged, with no colour change and looks like new.