

Drones and AI Are Reshaping How Storm Restoration Contractors Compete in 2026

The roofing industry is in the middle of a technology shift, and the contractors feeling it most sharply are those in storm restoration.

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-- According to the 2026 State of the Roofing Industry report published by Roofing Contractor Magazine, 54% of roofing contractors are now using drones as part of their regular workflow. That number has climbed steadily year over year, driven by two pressures that are not going away: persistent labor shortages and a post-storm competitive environment where the first contractor on the door wins the job the vast majority of the time.



The labor math is straightforward. The same report found that 85% of contractors struggled to hire skilled workers in 2024, and one in five roofers currently working in the United States is over 55 years old. Drone-based workflows let smaller crews cover more territory without adding headcount, which is increasingly the only option for operators who cannot find the people to staff traditional inspection methods.

The competitive math is equally clear. NOAA data confirmed over 12 million U.S. properties sustained hail damage in 2024. State Farm reported paying \$3.8 billion in hail-related home repair claims that year. When weather events of that scale hit a territory, the window to reach homeowners before a competitor does is measured in hours. Contractors who spend days manually completing assessments and producing documentation before knocking doors are already behind.

The gap that has been hardest to close is the space between flying a neighborhood with a drone and actually having something to hand a homeowner at the door. Raw footage is not a damage report. AI-powered platforms like [Roof Gauge](#) are built specifically for that gap, processing drone



Two trends will define roofing in 2026: structural labor constraints and the shift from experimental to truly operational AI."

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imagery into detailed, insurance-ready damage assessments in under 60 seconds. The result is a contractor who can fly a neighborhood in the morning and be knocking doors with professional documentation before noon, rather than spending the next day assembling reports manually.

The 2026 industry report also found that AI adoption among roofing contractors grew from 29% in 2024 to 40% in 2025. That trajectory reflects a broader recognition

across the industry that technology extending the capacity of existing crews is no longer a premium option. In a labor market that is not resolving quickly, it has become an operational baseline.

Spring hail season across the central United States is the period when these advantages compound most visibly. Contractors who have modernized their post-storm workflow enter the season's most active window already ahead of competitors who are still working through manual processes.

About RoofTech Studios

RoofTech Studios is an independent technology research and media outlet covering innovation in the roofing and storm restoration industry.

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