



# nerej

## **Your roofing contractor or consultant can be a true asset to you and your business**

April 13, 2010 - Construction Design & Engineering

Your roof, it's something that most people do not think about unless it's leaking. But when it is leaking most people would do almost anything to make it stop leaking and FAST. Well roofing is not a complicated business. Like any trade, you need qualified and honest people performing the work. If not you will either be disappointed with the repair or broke trying to resolve the problem. If you are an owner, facility manager or a maintenance worker for a commercial or industrial property you know that your vendors are one of your most important people in order to keep your building running smoothly. Most companies have an electrician, plumber even a painter that they use for maintenance. In most cases buildings do not have a roofing contractor on their vendor list. After a new roof is installed it is usually decades before it needs any attention, hence the lack of a "preferred roofer" on the building.

Just as the electrician or plumber gets to "know" the building it would be the same for a roofing contractor. If you are managing a facility with a large roof area, you need someone to monitor and maintain the roof in order to avoid any catastrophic problems down the road. This person can be on the staff of the building or it can be an outside vendor. The key is to have someone monitor and maintain the condition of the roof. A good roofing contractor can advise you of the sometimes simple repairs that might extend the life of your roof. And when it comes time to replace the roof you then have someone to give you a baseline to work from that will help you select the correct type of roof system.

One of our customers is a large food processor. They cannot have a leak during production. They have an old roof that we maintain which leaks only on a rare occasion because we are on the building on a monthly basis. Due to the age of the roof the asphalt and metal flashings are constantly cracking. By patching these items when detected we prevent most leaks from occurring. At some point the roofs needs replacement but it's not in the budget so the facility manager budgeted for the regular repairs. Roof maintenance is a lot less expensive than a big claim due to a leak.

One hundred years ago you did not have a lot of choice in commercial roofing. Fifty years ago there was not a lot of choice in commercial roofing. If it was a flat roof you put on a tar & gravel roof. When single ply membranes came into the picture all of a sudden there was a choice. Well today technology has taken us to the next level where you can decide on the type of membrane which would best meet your needs and the type of installation. It used to be that rubber (EPDM) roofing membrane was the dominant leader in the membrane roofing world. Today there is an array of membranes to choose from with each one claiming to be the best for one reason or another. The reality of it all is that most of the single ply membranes on the market today perform as well as the other does. There was a time that each product had its own problems and they have since been

resolved. You will find one manufacturer who knocks rubber vs. PVC or a PVC manufacturer who is knocking TPO. At the end of the day these membranes all perform and carry the same warranties. The variety of membranes might sound Greek to you which is why you need someone who can help select the correct roof system for your building and that person can be the roofing contractor you are using or a consultant you bring in.

Roofing today has gone from the new technology to the budget technology in a short period of time. A few short years ago before anyone knew what a derivative was or a credit default swap was there was a lot of money around and in some cases people just "ordered up" a roof. In some cases it was a roofing consultant whom wrote the "Cadillac" spec or you might replace what was originally on the building with the same. Regardless of what was available we bid according to the specs and the customer got it. Well today is a different day, most people know what a derivative is and what a credit default swap is and understand that we are still in a very precarious spot financially and globally.

Now is when your contractor or consultant can be a true asset to you. When your budget is tight it is now more than even that you need new solutions to your old problems. You need to assess your roof and determine the correct path to take. Do you keep patching as you have? Do you do major repairs? Do you do replace the existing roof?

One customer has always installed fully adhered EPDM rubber roofs in the past because that's what they've been doing for 30 years. Well they now have a mechanically attached TPO (rubber based membrane) roof on one of their buildings. This type of roof system is less expensive to install than a fully adhered roof because we can save on the labor and materials. Notice I did not say a cheaper roof because it is not cheaper it is just less expensive. It has the same warranty and performs the same, it is just a little bit different material and installed in a different way.

Patch? Patching can be done on any roof system so long as the roof is still in a condition that the existing surface will accept a patch to bond to it. There are some instances where the roof is too far gone to get new material to bond to the old. But there are many roofs that can be patched with good results and allow the owner to defer the replacement of the roof for another day.

Major repairs? If your roof has some areas in a deteriorated state then patching has never solved your roof problems and maybe you need to be more aggressive and do some major repairs to fix the real problem areas so you do not have to keep going back. By replacing areas that have chronic leaks you can reduce the tenant frustration and coast for a period of time before your next roof crisis or when you are finally able to replace the roof.

Roof replacement? Maybe you are beyond major repairs or patching and the roof needs to be replaced. Today more of our customers are considering different types of roof systems in order to replace the roof within their "new" budget.

Another customer who owns and manages a number of suburban malls had a super market that desperately needed a new roof. It had been neglected for years before they bought the property so the existing roof system was gone. It was apparent that patching this roof was useless. We suggested a roof system that can be installed over an existing roof even if there is trapped water within the existing roof. Whenever you re-roof a building one of the biggest costs in the job is removing and disposing of the old roof. If you can eliminate this component of the job you can save huge amounts. Needless to say our customer was very happy to have a new roof over the super market which carries a 15 year warranty and we did not have to strip the existing roof. Simple, huge savings, happy customer.

Stephen McNally is president of McNally Roofing Co., Boston.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540