

Roofing Fire Safety

What you need to know

by Jill Cheff

In August 2008 a fire roared through the Harbor Club Apartments in Harrison Township, destroying the 38-unit structure. Fortunately, no human life was lost but most of the residents were left homeless and were uninsured. The blaze was started by a contractor working on the roof with a lit torch. While some of the actual details of the incident are not clear, it is obvious that safety precautions were not used and this was an avoidable occurrence.



Some of you may think that this information doesn't apply to you or your buildings. Think again. Almost all asphalt-based roofing material—Modified, SBS, Built-Up Roofing and Coal Tar Pitch—used on today's roofs are still installed or repaired using heating methods!

CNA is the largest, endorsed insurance carrier for the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA). Over the years, the payout for serious torch-related roof fires has been so common and exorbitant, they are costing the insurance companies millions of dollars in claims each year. This has led to new safety guidelines that have now made certain applications *UNINSURABLE* and, in some cases, *criminally negligent*.

CNA (and most carriers) now require that any contractor using torch applications must be certified through the 'CERTA' program offered by the NRCA/MRCA. The CERTA program has been designed to address the concerns of building owners, roofing contractors, the insurance industry, fire and code authorities, roofing material manufacturers, equipment manufacturers, and fuel suppliers.

In these economic times, it is understandable when a building owner or property manager may look to the contractor offering the lowest price. Unfortunately, that same contractor may not have the insurance or credentialing necessary to perform a safe installation and repair.

Don't trust your investment to just anyone...

- Hire a contractor who has NRCA/MRCA certified applicators.
- Actively communicate with your contractor during any roofing job.
- For more information; www.nrca.net; www.rsimag.com; www.lakestclair.net; www.freep.com

NRCA/MRCA CERTA Applicator
Firestone Inner Circle of Quality



Jill Cheff is the Sales Manager for Newton Crane Roofing and has been in commercial construction sales for over 12 years. Newton Crane is a commercial/industrial flat roofing company and is approved by major manufacturers.