

## *Is Your Flat Roof Making You CRAZY?!*

It's that time of year again.....freeze and thaw cycles have apparently wreaked havoc with your roof. Tenants are calling and complaining. The new dry wall you just installed needs to be replaced....again. More ceiling tiles. Suite 204 had a slip and fall. The alarm system at the computer store got knocked out because of an ice dam. Oh gosh, Georgia in Dr. Drakes office is just swearing she can smell mildew! Unfortunately, these are all in different buildings! .....and this is when you think, "I hate FLAT ROOFS!!!"

Anyone who has been through any one of these scenarios KNOWS frustration. The cost of a poor roof system can be incalculable. Lost tenants, lost wages, interior damage, insurance claims, they all add up.....so the question to ask yourself is, "What do I do?"

### **Getting on track**

Hopefully you are representing a building owner who understands the roof is a primary part of his buildings' overall integrity. A well-maintained roof system keeps the rest of the structure and its interior components from an early death.( In the long run, studies bear out that a maintained roof will actually cost the owner less, up to a third in overall savings.)

- 1) **Understand the roof you are working with.** If this is a new building for you, find out as much as you can about the history of the roof. What type of system is up there? How old is it? Who installed it? Who has been maintaining it? Is it under warranty? Are there any current leaks? Ask for the applicable paper trail.
- 2) **Have a good roofing contractor.** Your maintenance man might be good at many things but if you have FLAT ROOF issues, go to a professional. If you don't know a good contractor, the NRCA (National Roofing Contractors Association) has some excellent guidelines to use on their web-site: [www.nrca.org](http://www.nrca.org).
- 3) **Have a 'Roof Evaluation' completed by a roofing professional.** Some companies do charge for this service and some reports are better than others. If this is a service the roofing company offers, they should be able to provide you a sample report so you can get an idea of the information *you might be getting*. Another option would be to hire a Registered Roofing Consultant.
- 4) **Read the report.** If the report is well organized with pictures of the deficiencies, costs to correct, and an overall summary of the roof components and condition, this will help you immensely when talking with your owner.
- 5) **Correct the problems.** Even the smallest deficiency over time can create big problems. Add to that a freeze/thaw cycle and you may have compromised your entire system! The best times to have an evaluation are in the spring and the fall. This will save you time, money, and aggravation and eliminate many of the emergency calls. A proactive approach will also show your tenants that you are a professional and interested in their security. DO NOT let anyone perform repairs unless they are authorized by the manufacturer to do so. If your roof is under warranty, this is especially important!
- 6) **Have a plan.** Now that your roof repairs are complete and debris and maintenance items are complete, work with your roofing contractor on how to

- keep your roof in its best shape. Often this will include follow up inspections, preventative repairs as the roof ages and sometimes frequent debris removal.
- 7) **No roof lasts forever.** The sooner you start with a good maintenance plan, the more years of useful life you can expect.... however the reality is, sometimes the roofer is called in too late to 'save the patient' so to speak. Extraordinary measures to revive the roof are usually not cost effective and your roofer will recommend replacing it.
  - 8) **Time for a roof replacement.** How do you know? When the repairs become 'age related' and frequent, or the cost is nearing the 5% per year mark, (of what a new roof would cost amortized over 20 years,) to keep it leak free.... it is time to start the process. Example... if your roofer has given you a budget of approximately \$100,000.00 to replace your roof, it is 15-plus years old and you have been spending over \$5,000.00 a year for repairs, this could be a very good indicator.
  - 9) **What kind of roof should I install?** There are many different systems and many top manufacturers to choose from. Your professional roofer will be able to tell you the features and benefits of a particular system that he feels will be best for your roof. Always ask questions. Registered Roofing Consultants can also help with this process.
  - 10) **Warranties.** Authorized installers can offer a full LABOR and MATERIAL warranty from most major manufacturers. Beware of wording that suggests the two are separate entities. The typical wording should read: *Two-year contractors warranty and a 15-year manufacturer's labor and material warranty.* Call the manufacturer if in doubt. All warranties are limited. Your contractor should be able to show you a sample warranty so you can read what it entails. Many warranties also exclude standing water so if this has been a problem in the past, make sure that this issue is addressed before moving forward.
  - 11) **For your best results.** ONLY choose a 'Professional Roofing Contractor.' A pro will be able to give you lots of client references, completed jobs similar to yours in the local market, will be authorized and recommended by the major manufacturer he is installing, is bonded and insured and has had a place of business for five or more years. They will also be affiliated with organizations that are dedicated to professional business practices, quality workmanship, employ trained crews and use only approved products.
  - 12) **Beware of low pricing.** This can be very tempting but **very seldom** is it the best plan for your roof or your client. The facts: There are contractors who will take your money and *not provide you with* the system you need, quality workmanship, trained crews, proper liability coverage, and full labor and material warranties.

**The Right System + The Best Contractor = Excellent Roof!!**

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