



The voice of professional roofing contractors.

NRCA POSITION PAPER ON DIRECT SALES OF ROOFING MATERIALS TO OWNERS

The National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) cautions the building owner who is contemplating a new or re-roofing project about contracting for the purchase of roofing materials separately from the installation of the roof from two different parties. By purchasing materials and labor separately, the owner is more likely to encounter problems during and after construction due to the division of responsibility.

Materials compatibility, on-site job coordination, and safety procedures are all areas in which the roofing contractor is knowledgeable and experienced. Separating the contractor who installs the materials from the roofing materials manufacturer whose materials will be installed can lead to a number of potential problems in each of these areas.

Materials Compatibility

Given the range and complexity of the materials now used in roof deck, insulation and roof membrane construction, and the interdependence of all components and parties in roof system construction, NRCA recommends that a professional roofing contractor who has overall responsibility for furnishing the materials and constructing the roof be retained. A professional roofing contractor is more knowledgeable than other parties about job site conditions on a day-to-day basis.

The professional roofing contractor deals with roofing material manufacturers on an ongoing basis. He knows which materials lend themselves to efficient and watertight installation and which can lead to problems. He is in the best position to respond quickly to conditions encountered in the field; based on his experience, he understands which materials are best suited for each particular job to lessen the chance of callbacks.

The roofing contractor typically has established long-term relationships with several manufacturers. He knows which manufacturers provide the most thorough inspections when a manufacturer's guarantee or warranty is required. He knows which manufacturers have demonstrated a long-term commitment to the roofing industry and will stand behind their products. The manufacturer is highly motivated to cooperate with the contractor because he wants the contractor to purchase materials from him on the next job.

On-site Job Coordination

Efficient job-site coordination is made far more difficult when the owner purchases the materials and the contractor has no contractual relationship with the material supplier. The owner, for example, may have failed to purchase all the necessary materials or may not have arranged for a sufficient quantity of the needed materials to be at the job site when required. The absence of some materials, such as those used for flashings, will disrupt the job, cause delays and prevent watertight installation.

The best method for making sure roofing materials stay dry and secure is to store them indoors. In lieu of having all the materials for a large job stored outside at the job site prior to commencement of the job through completion, roofing contractors will frequently have materials transported to the job site from either their own warehouse or from a supplier on a periodic basis as they are needed. This requires close coordination to see that the necessary materials are present and in good condition when needed.

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Unless the owner has suitable facilities for materials storage, all the materials may be stored outside for an extended duration when the owner contracts with the roofing contractor for labor only, thus increasing the risk of damage or loss.

Labor-only contracts can affect the availability of the necessary materials. The owner may not have purchased a sufficient quantity of a given materials. Frequently, especially with bituminous materials, the quantity estimated in the drafting room is not adequate in the field. An owner who contracts with a supplier may not have another supply source immediately available when there is a shortage of material, resulting in a delay and possibly damage to the newly constructed roof. A roofing contractor is better equipped to deal with this situation. He may have materials in stock which can be used for the job or he may be able to get substitute materials quickly from another source with whom he has an established relationship.

Safety Considerations

NRCA also recommends against labor-only contracts because of concerns for safety. Roofing systems can incorporate materials that may be dangerous to untrained workers and perhaps building occupants or people in the vicinity of the job. The manufacturers of these systems are most familiar with the physical properties and the inherent dangers; the roofing contractor needs to work closely with the manufacturer to make sure the contractor is aware of the dangers and knows the proper safety procedures.

When the contractor does not purchase the materials but is furnished the materials from the owner, the requisite safety information and procedures may not be conveyed to the contractor and implemented.

Warranty Obligations

Roofing materials manufacturers and roofing contractors have historically worked together so that, if the owner obtains a manufacturer's long-term guarantee or warranty, coverage includes leaks caused either by a defect in materials or a defect in workmanship. Manufacturers and contractors generally enter into agreements in which the manufacturer designates the contractor as an approved applicator of the roofing system, the contractor agrees to make repairs for a certain period, and the manufacturer agrees to make repairs for the balance of the warranty period. Even when the owner elects not to obtain the manufacturer's long-term guarantee, contractors who provide materials commonly guarantee labor and materials.

If the contractor does not purchase or furnish the materials, the contractor can not be expected to take any action if the materials proved to be unsatisfactory other than to refer the problem back to the owner, because the contractor would have no contractual relationship with the manufacturer. The contractor cannot be expected to assume any responsibility regarding the materials or obtain assistance or redress from the manufacturer. If an owner has a problem with the roof, he may have difficulty getting it resolved quickly and efficiently if he is forced to deal separately with the supplier and contractor.

The decision to purchase roofing materials directly and contract with a roofing contractor on a labor-only basis is for the owner to make, but the National Roofing Contractors Association recommends that the owner compare whatever initial savings there may be to disadvantages and potential problems in the long run.