



Tech Talk

By Bob LaCrosse, CAE
Director of Technical Services

Roof Inspection & Maintenance

The roof is the most vulnerable part of the building exposed to the elements. The built-up or elasto/plastic roof is rarely seen. Therefore, it often suffers from being neglected until serious, expensive trouble suddenly appears.

The best designed and applied roofing systems cannot be expected to reach a full-life expectancy without proper inspection and maintenance. Any roof requires maintenance to insure its continued serviceability because it is subject to damage from foot traffic, extreme weather, abuse, stress concentration and even vandalism. It is absolutely imperative that minor repairs be made immediately to prevent further deterioration of the roof system.

All roofs require periodic inspection and maintenance to achieve maximum roof life. While complex and major repairs and some maintenance should always be performed by qualified roofing contractors, building owners can help maintain roofs with regular clean-up procedures. The designer and roofing contractor should make the owner aware of these procedures after the roof is constructed.

According to the NRCA Roofing & Waterproofing Manual, an intelligent roof inspection and maintenance program should always provide for the following:

Owner Inspection and Maintenance Recommendations

- ☐ Inspect the roof at least twice yearly, in the spring and fall, and inspect all roofs after any severe storm. Make frequent inspections on buildings housing manufacturing facilities that evacuate exhaust debris onto the roof. Clean roof drains of debris. Remove leaves, twigs, cans, balls, etc., which could plug roof drains. Bag and remove all debris from the roof since debris on the roof surface will be quickly swept into drains by heavy rains causing drainage problems.
- ☐ Notify the roofing contractor immediately after a roof leak occurs. If possible, note conditions resulting in leakage; heavy or light rain, wind direction, temperature and the time of year the leak occurs are all important clues to tracing roof leaks. Note whether the leaks stop shortly after each rain or continue to

drip until the roof is dry. If the owner is prepared with facts, the diagnosis and repair of roof problems can proceed more rapidly.

- ☐ File all job records, plans and specifications for future reference. Set up a maintenance schedule. Record maintenance procedures as they occur. Log all access times and parties working on the roof in case damage should occur.
- ☐ Do not allow foot traffic on the roof in very cold or very hot temperatures as damage can result. Do not allow the installation of television and radio antennas or mechanical equipment without notifying the roofing contractor and consulting with him about the methods and details for these installations. One of the keys to avoiding roof damage is the key to the padlock on the roof hatch! Allow only authorized personnel on the roof.
- ☐ In emergency situations, patch leaks to minimize property loss.
- ☐ Except for emergency situations, do not attempt owner-performed roof repairs. The puncturing of a blister or the spreading of a coating or mastic only covers up evidence the roofing contractor needs to ascertain the problem. Do not consider using maintenance coatings, "resaturants," sprays or "miracle" products without consulting a qualified roofing contractor.

Roofing Contractor Maintenance Recommendations

After completion, each roof is subjected to various weathering conditions. Roofs do not wear uniformly since certain areas may be affected more severely than others. Equalizing wear by upgrading worn areas is the secret to prolonged roof life. To equalize wear the maintenance and repair of these areas should be done by a qualified roofing contractor. Maintenance may be as simple as regravelling a windswept corner, or more complex, such as correcting a water ponding problem; maintenance is a necessary part of good roofing practice.

Many companies and organizations have outlined recommendations for roof inspection and roof maintenance, NRCA encourages such recommendations. To assist in establishing an inspection or maintenance program, refer to the following publications:

- ☐ NRCA/ARMA *Manual of Roof Maintenance and Roof Repair*, available from the NRCA Roofing Service Center.
- ☐ *Roof Maintenance, and Maintenance and Repairs*, available from The Roofing Industry Educational Institute, 6851 S. Holly Circle, Englewood, Colo. 80112.

Periodic roof inspections and a good maintenance program can add trouble free years of service to a roof system and save money and avoid serious failure in the long run. Roofs are comprised of a number of materials and combined a number of ways. Some are fragile. All are subject to stresses and deterioration from the elements and man. A program of inspection and maintenance is necessary to maintain the integrity and gain the best performance of the roof system.

