

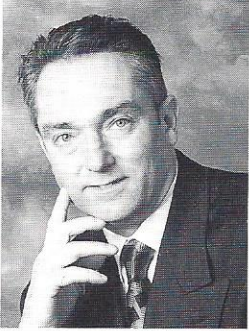
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TO "ROOF" OR NOT TO "ROOF" THAT IS THE QUESTION

by Dennis Kulesza



To repair or replace an existing roof is a more complex situation than

most people realize. Many factors must be taken into consideration. The first thing that must be determined is how widespread the problems are. Are the leaks confined to one area or do they occur in several areas? If the leaks are spread out over the entire roof area, it is an indication that the roof system has problems which are not cost effective to repair.

The next question that must be answered is where do the problems occur. Do the leaks show up around roof projections such as plumbing stacks, roof fans, skylights, parapet walls, etc.? If so, is it possible that there are problems with flashings? However, don't be fooled. Depending upon the number of roofs and the type of roof deck such as concrete or steel, water may travel between layers and show up in the interior at an opening around a roof projection. If the leak shows up on a surface where there are no roof projections, it is a good bet that there is a defect in the roof membrane itself.

Once you have determined what is happening on the inside of the building, you are now ready to conduct a visual inspection of the roof. It is helpful to know the approximate age of the roof, but do not let it mislead you because many relatively new roofs can be damaged beyond repair because of the use of cheap materials or faulty installation techniques. While, on the other hand, roofs in excess of fifteen to twenty years old, which were properly installed, can still have life and can make sense to repair.

Before you zero in on the problem areas, take a look at the overall condition of the roof.

DOES THE ROOF POND WATER?

According to the National Roofing Contractors Association, any water that stays on a roof 48 hours after a rainstorm may be detrimental to certain types of roof materials.

IS THE DRAINAGE SYSTEM WORKING PROPERLY?

Debris around roof drains or improperly pitched gutters will commonly be the source of your problems.

IS THE ROOF BLISTERING?

Blisters are caused by moisture

trapped between layers of roofing material. This moisture, when heated by the sun, results in vapor pressure, thus forming what is known as a blister. This phenomena will eventually cause the felt to deteriorate and leak. Wide spread blistering is probably the most difficult situation to deal with. This type of problem is almost always impossible to repair because by the time the blister has developed into a leak, the felts have already begun to disintegrate. At this point, it is advisable to deal with the immediate problems in localized areas, and keep your fingers crossed that you can stop the leak until such time you are in a position to do the inevitable - install a new roof.

Hopefully the aforementioned is not the case, and you can more reassuringly begin to inspect the flashings in general and specifically inspect any known problem areas. Metal flashings generally have problems at lap joints because of the high coefficient of linear expansion of metal generally used for flashing purposes. Technically speaking, joints in metal flashing should be designed to allow for expansion and contraction. Since this is generally not the case, when you see the shiny pretty stuff running along the base of a parapet wall, you are probably looking at the source of your problems.