



Your Roof System

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT



BY DON
SMITH

Florida: high 86 degrees, southwest winds 15–25 miles per hour. Tonight: heavy rain and a possibility of some flooding. Tomorrow: winds northwest at 20 mph, lows 35–40 degrees, warming to only 65 degrees. Tomorrow night: winds east with coastal showers, moving into the mid-80s by the weekend.

Sound familiar? Florida puts the test to all roofing systems. None are spared. The sun here, along with our torrential rains, thermal shock, extreme winds, and violent temperature changes, wears out all roof systems extremely quickly.



Every roof will need maintenance and upkeep. We look to the professionals to provide us with the best recommendations to get the most for our money. It's important that those professionals have experience and guide us in the best direction. Many associations hire consultants to get input, but beware. A registered, county-licensed roofer can pass himself off as your consultant, which can end up causing you trouble and money. It's perfectly legal, as long as the county-licensed roofer isn't doing the work. Usually, the consultant, in the fine print of his contract paperwork states that he is not responsible for the work and that the contractor of choice is. It usually states that he is only there to monitor for approximately two to four hours a day. Typically, he ends up being on site for one hour per week, which is usually to hand over the bill. Then, a short time after the project is complete, when you begin to have problems, the consultant and the contractor are nowhere to be found. Months go by, until legislation is threatened, and you realize that they provided you with no warranty at all. Sound familiar? Don't let this happen to you.

All management firms and association boards should verify the experience of their consultant. Was he a state-certified contractor? If so, for how long? Was his company reputable? In the past, did he actually install the type of roof system your association is thinking about installing? Or, is consulting just a job he is doing because his business was unsuccessful? Will he download a generic manufacturer specification, put it in a book, and take your hard-earned money to the bank?

As a state-certified roofing spray foam contractor that has been installing roofs since the mid-1970s, I can assure you that it's important that you do your homework. Speak to other associations. In most cases, it's best to hire and deal with an engineer. They are educated and trained to understand the issues in order to protect the association through diligence in specifications, independent testing, and system warranties. They may have never installed your type of roof, but usually, their professional training will guide you to make smart decisions and protect your investment.

After the engineer has set your specifications and watched your project, have an independent testing firm do a job analysis and report prior to final payment. This may save money and grief later, even though it will cost a small fee up front. You will have peace of mind.

Early in the bidding process, ask your contractor how he will be dealing with any problems that occur, and make sure it's included, in writing, into the contract. Every system will require maintenance, some for minor blemishes and some for leaks. Know where you stand ahead of time.

Most system warranties cover labor and materials for repairs during the warranty period. They do cost you up front, but they protect you down the road. I don't know how many times I've lost a project to someone who offered an association no warranty and were slightly cheaper on a \$300,000–\$400,000 job, only to be called six months later to make corrections since the company who completed the work will not return the association's calls. The sad thing is that the warranty I wanted to provide to them was the \$14,000–\$20,000 that was the difference in his bid and mine.

Another good line used by manufacturers is the 20-year NDL (no dollar limit) warranty. It is usually carried by most roofers for two years. After that, the manufacturer's representative states that the



problem is in the fault of the application of the product, therefore, releasing them from liability for the material. You should stress to your contractor that you want a minimum of five years from him, as well as a 10-year system warranty from the manufacturer, period. Also, be sure to read the warranties in their entirety. Some use terminology that may be confusing

to try to skate around what they are willing to offer. Ask questions and have a clear understanding of any unfamiliar terms or vocabulary within the warranty.

Make sure your roof is secured to meet code against wind uplift as required for insurance purposes. Warranties in the spray foam and coatings industry typically are a five year minimum from the contractor, along with 10-, 15-, and 20-year system warranties from the manufacturer. They do not give the right of a 15- or 20-year warranty to just any contractor. Only quality contractors can offer this kind of warranty. Of course, you pay for it up front, which covers the independent inspection and cost for any minor maintenance later on, if and as needed.

In recent years, I've maintained and resealed some projects that were installed in the 1970s that have provided energy and watertight efficiency far past the normal life expectancy of any roof. Originally, these systems had engineers specifying, as well as independent inspections firms, with 10-year warranties. I believe they speak for themselves.

Keep in mind, a contractor refurbishing an existing roof cannot accept all responsibility for the existing roof if a problem that is not present today surfaces during the warranty period on the old roof. Did the contractor state how he would handle a situation like that? Did he give you a one-return visit free of charge? Did he specify a certain amount of square footage repair to the old existing issues that he would do out of

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pocket? Did he put it in writing in the contract? Remember, you don't know if you don't ask, and it's not binding if it's not included in the contract.

Be aware, if after permitting and contract approval, products start changing. This is usually a red flag unless you, the owner, investigate or demand the change yourself. Again, here's where the engineer can safely guide and keep you on track with an objective and professional point of view. In fact, an engineer may be cheaper than the consultant.

Another issue I've come across in Florida is local power providers giving incentives to the building owners. This is a one time only offer on the building and is an effort by the major power providers to help reduce power consumption on the grid so that our counties have power for growth during peak demand times. This incentive, if approved, will be deducted directly from the original contract price. The power providers will have the client/customer sign off for pre-approval, as well as at the conclusion of the project. There will be a paper trail, if your contractor is legitimate. In roofing, it is primarily offered for the white reflective coatings, and it is for air conditioned spaces only. The draw of power is selected from peak demand months—June, July, and August—and at peak demand times each day.

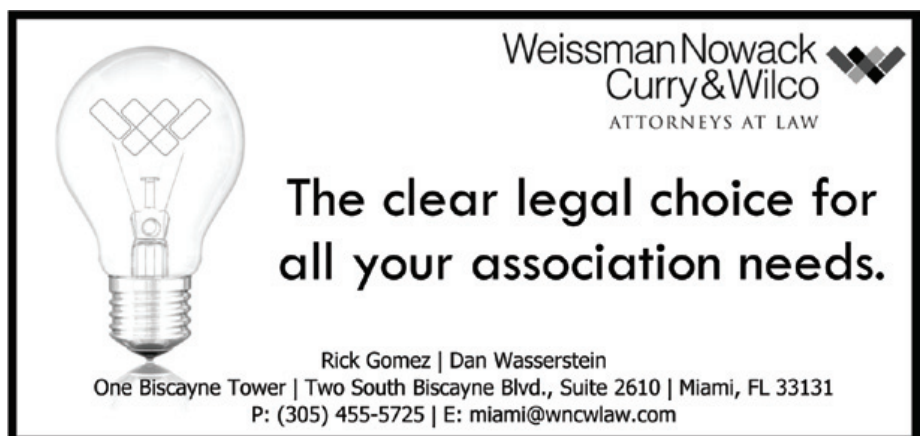
The owners are still responsible to select a quality contractor and quality material for the building's roof. The contractor does not work for the power companies

directly. If someone states that he'll give you the discount without documentation, be on alert. He or she is probably not an approved contractor. Check with your power provider to be certain. Most power provider incentives require a minimum 10-year warranty and white reflective roof coating, which meet the Cool Roof Rating Council's standards for reflective quality.

Silicones are one of the best, most durable reflective coatings in the industry of Florida today. They hold up to sun, water ponding, and abuse. They go over metal, built-up, single-ply, modified, and spray foam. The contractor must, however, first find and seal all prior leaks stated or observed. This is good roofing practice. Do not use acrylic elastomerics on flat roofs. Cheap, acrylic paints will chip, crack, and peel off roofs in short order, taking your incentive with it, something you'll never get again. Some contractors are even using house paints. Imagine that! Remember, you pick the contractor, the product, the warranty, and a price that you can live with. Demand quality from all four choices.

Don't be led down the wrong path. Ask a professional, check his credentials, hire an engineer, and get a sound warranty that is clearly spelled out. Utilize an independent inspection firm, choose quality material, and get a second opinion. I hope that I've been able to educate you and your association on some of the do's and don'ts when looking into your next new or retrofit roof system.

Don Smith is President of All Florida Urethane, Inc., in Melbourne, Florida. For more information, call (321) 259-1372 or visit www.allfloridaurethane.com. ■



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