

SERVICE ★ NOTES

FROM NATIONS ROOF

FEB 05 • V 2 . 0 2

SEVEN KEYS TO AN EFFECTIVE ROOF MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

*by***Patty Donohue***Nations Roof of NY*

Any consideration about what to look for in a preventive maintenance (PM) program is based on the assumption that management believes in maintenance in the first place. The degree of commitment to PM has a lot to do with the training, experience and background of the decision maker as well as the business of the building owner and the entity to be maintained.

For example, engineers tend to be believers in maintenance, as are building owners who have had bad roof experiences. So too are companies that are equipment-intensive or those that are very sensitive to a shut-down. It also seems that some vendors have done a better job than others at convincing their customers that maintenance of their products will reap significant benefits. These vendors are also more committed to providing professional maintenance programs for their building components such as HVAC, boilers, water towers and elevators.

A roof should be a high-priority maintenance item because it is a prime source of savings. Yet, PM is not nearly as prevalent for roofs as for other components of the building because of a lack of commitment on the part of both the roofing industry and building owners and managers. The results are a significant waste of roofing resources and a lot of legal fees.

There are roof maintenance programs available and the industry has become much more responsive to these needs as the cost of re-roofing increases and becomes more complicated by such problems as asbestos removal. But not all programs are cost effective.

A quality roof preventive maintenance program should include seven major points:

COMMITMENT

More roof maintenance is done during economic slowdowns than at any other time. During slow times, contractors tend to think that since the owners can't pay for new roofs, they might pay for maintenance repairs. The result is an inspection and often a big-ticket repair job. In addition, there is often no annual follow up.

Consultants are available to do inspections but lack the ability to do the repairs competitively. Getting bids for repair work is often difficult since it is not considered attractive.

Ideally, it is best to get a contractor with a service department that is committed to maintenance. Satisfy yourself that there is a minimum of interdepartmental conflicts of interest. Ask yourself if the vendor sincerely wants your roof to last its design life. There should be separate management of the service operation and it should operate largely independently of the construction operation.

REGULAR INSPECTION

The most important element of cost-effective maintenance is regular inspection. Many industry sources recommend inspection two times every year, spring and fall. Maintenance can work with a single quality inspection annually.

Roofs take a beating. This is especially so today due to new types of construction, with more insulation in the roof and more equipment on the roof.

By inspecting regularly, repairs are fewer. Small problems cannot grow into big problems.

COMPREHENSIVE INSPECTIONS

Inspections must include every element of the roof that could conceivably cause a leak into the building or roof system. It is not just about the roof. This includes:

- The roof itself, wall flashings, seams, projection flashings, surfacing materials, coating, membrane, roof fastening, insulation substrate, deck and drainage.
- Masonry, including parapet walls, masonry copings, stair bulkheads, penthouses, equipment rooms, chimneys and elevator bulkheads.
- Sheet metal such as metal copings, gutters, leaders, scuppers, counter flashings, edging, gravel stop, roof projection flashings, metal roofs, fascias, mansards, termination bars, siding and through wall systems.
- Windows and doors at roof level, especially caulking and sealants or extrusions.
- Equipment on the roof, including HVAC, plumbing, air handling units and cooling towers.

QUALIFIED INSPECTORS

The quality of the inspection is of obvious importance. This is especially critical considering the scope required for a thorough inspection. Inspectors must be both experienced and trained in all aspects of all types of roofing and sheet metal. A strong understanding of masonry and water proofing is a must and a good working knowledge of the waterproofing aspects of rooftop installations is important. A vendor who has several inspectors and rotates those inspectors is a plus. What one may miss, the next may see.

Qualified inspectors must also stay up to date on the most recent developments in the industry. Experience in the actual application of roofs is a factor. An inspector who has installed roofs knows what and how defects can occur. How crews of men take short cuts, get tired, hot or cold. Experience in the roofing service and maintenance business is also a positive. Service technicians spend endless hours searching, water testing, and flood testing to find leaks in all kinds of construction configurations. This body of experience is extremely valuable.

PROPER REPAIRS

Once the roof is inspected, repairs must be made in a good, workmanlike manner, with proper materials. Some PM programs provide for repairs to be made during the actual inspection; others require approval by the owner prior to the repairs. No PM program will work if the recommended repairs are not performed. This sounds easy, but it is not. There are thousands of roof systems, warranty provisions, combinations of conditions, bitumens, adhesives, number of plies, membranes, felts, decks, manufacturers and installation methods that must be dealt with.



A preventive maintenance company whose value is being measured by the owners on performance and whose bread and butter is the yearly renewal of the roof maintenance contract has an obvious incentive to make repairs that last. He also has an incentive to protect the existing warranty on the roof if there is one by using the proper methods and materials.

SERVICE

Every owner/manager of a facility must have a roofing contractor who will be available to make emergency repairs 24/7. This role is best serviced by a dedicated service department. Choose a vendor who can provide prompt service not only for the convenience of the tenant, but because of the damage that can be done to the roof and interior of the building. He should also be available to work with other trades to make new roof penetrations or alterations. Many excellent roofs have been severely damaged by tenant installations. The PM vendor must be available 24 hours, 7 days a week. There also should be a procedure for Disaster Response particularly in snow load, hail or hurricane areas.

Damage not attended to allows water entry into the roof system. The proper repair requires the complete removal of wet materials and replacement. This is expensive and can be avoided by prompt action. That moisture cannot be effectively vented out with roof vents.

PAPERWORK/COMMUNICATION

This is called "Roof Management." The PM vendor should include in his services the investigation and retention of information critical to managing roofing assets:

- Technical data on each of your roofs
- Historical data on installation and repairs
- On-site instructions for service techs, (Security provisions, sign-in procedures, work hours, etc.)
- Manufacturer Warranty information
- A complete scaled roof diagram
- Orientation photos as well as condition photos
- Wall sections if available

A PM company must be sensitive to the needs of real estate managers and owners who cannot be at every site. They need to know what is being done, what to expect, and how their money is being spent. A PM company should have good communication vehicles for keeping the main office as well as the site people informed.



For more information, please call toll-free

1-800-444-ROOF