

StructureTec[®]

Corporate Marketing/Business Development

Business Technology and Research Park

4777 Campus Drive • Kalamazoo, MI 49008-2594

(269) 353-9944 • FAX (269) 544-1671 • www.structuretec.com



Total Building Envelope Management SolutionSM

Roof System Specifications: A Road Map for Success Ken G. Louisignau, Marketing Manager, StructureTec

In an era of downsizing, consolidation of responsibilities and the myriad of issues that facility managers have to deal with on a daily basis, is it any wonder that major capital roofing projects are often embarked upon with a “whatever is easiest and convenient” mindset that, more often than not, produces a roof that does not deliver the life span expected?

Before engaging in a roof project, the facility manager should give a great deal of thought to exactly why the roof is being replaced. Questions that should be asked are: Am I engaging in this project because it is a reaction to leaks? Is it because current warranties have expired? Does the roof area really need to be replaced, or is it a candidate for restoration? Should I look into retrofitting? Is this just a matter of strategic repairs? The real challenge for the facility manager is deciding what really needs to be done.

If the facility manager can convince management that the roof is a real asset and should be treated in the same way as any other valuable piece of equipment, then he can convince management to properly assess the actual conditions of the roof and prioritize replacement/repair based on actual conditions. A total assessment of the roof, including an infrared scan for wet insulation, is highly recommended. It is recommended that the infrared scan assessment be done by a neutral party instead of a contractor or a product manufacturer. This will guarantee findings that are unbiased and in the best interest of the building owner.

Too often a roof project is begun with a thumbnail outline of services, and progresses with bids based on nothing more substantial than a contractor’s sales pitch, with the lowest price driving the decisions. These are accompanied by questionable warranties that are made solely with the purpose of making the building owner feel safe with the lowest bid.

However, the manufacturer will often include qualifying language that will limit their liability and leave the owner without coverage that they thought protected them and their decision. At best, warranties will provide for the repair of water ingress without resolution of the root cause and restoration of the damage caused by leaks, including wet insulation replacement.

With roof remediation averaging \$8-12 per sq. ft., it is imperative that roof projects be approached with the due diligence afforded when any major project or purchase is made. The best assurance of a successful roofing project is utilizing a construction specification addressing every aspect of construction and clearly delineating all products to be used.

When reviewing the offered specifications, it is vital that building owners assure themselves that several critical issues are addressed:

- A. The specification lists at least four manufacturers and verifies that their products are compatible.
 1. Specifications provided by manufacturers will offer only their products, thus nullifying one-half the purpose of bidding; only labor will be the negotiable.
- B. Specifications are designed by incorporating the building owner’s needs and expectations.

1. The specifications should tell the bidding contractors what is wanted, not vice versa.
- C. Specifications will address all products and have detailed drawings as to exactly how the system will be installed. These specifications will, of course, meet or exceed all manufacturers' requirements for warranty.
- D. Specifications should follow an accepted format such as CSI (Construction Specifications Institute).
 1. Do not accept a description of services offered.
- E. Specifications should demand insurance and bonding commensurate with the size of the project.
 1. Assures the building owner that bidders are both capable of doing the work and carry policies that will protect the building owner.
- F. Specifications will include line item pricing on such things as deck replacement, which would protect the building owner from inflated "as needed" materials (Unit Cost Requirements).
- G. Both material warranties (usually twenty year) and contractor guarantees (5 year minimum) should always be specified.

In addition to very specific specifications, it is also highly recommended that the building owner invest in project management by a neutral party to ensure that the project follows the specification to the letter. Mandatory pre-bid attendance on site and not entertaining voluntary substitutions will ensure everyone bidding is both familiar with the job site and conditions, and acknowledge that products that could be less than desirable are not allowed to be brought on site.

Finally, even though warranties and guarantees are part of the specification package, it needs to be acknowledged that these are totally marketing tools, and should never be the sole consideration for choosing a contractor or manufacturer. The best insurance a building owner can have on a roof project is a detailed specification, proper installation, and making sure the project construction is completely monitored by a competent consultant, delivering the highest level of quality for the end product.