

Taking Care of Business by Taking Care of the Details

On occasion, I receive calls from building owners complaining about a contractor's work. It usually is an item the contractor could have spent a little extra time to prevent during the application. Sometimes it is an aesthetics problem, other times performance can be compromised. I guess the feeling is that these things take too much time and the job was bid under a tight budget. I've found the callbacks and poor customer goodwill are 10 times worse than doing the job right the first time.

So what items give contractors the most problems?

Standing Water: It's really not all that hard to get water to drain off a SPF roof. First, bid the job so that drainage is figured into the costs. You don't necessarily have to add tons of foam. You may be able to add drains, cut or groove drainage channels or mechanically fasten a tapered board system first. These systems don't cost as much as you might think and SPF adheres to them very well.

Ugly Foam: Most applicators can spray smooth foam on the flat portions of the roof. Where you get really ugly foam is in the hard to reach areas and places you have to get real close to. You know what I mean ie: drains, gutters, edge flashings, pipes, curbs, under air conditioners, etc. It doesn't take a lot of work to trim the lumps and smooth the job with more foam. Remember, each job is your signature and resumé. Most building owners expect a job that looks like the brochure you hand them. If the job looks like a bumpy dirt road, you can be sure they have concerns about performance and quality as well.

The "Almost Correct" Flashing Detail: "Nine times out of ten this detail works". I hate to hear a contractor justify a problem with this line. Never use the detail that fails 10% of the time. That's like saying your brakes work nine times out of ten. You end up spending twice as much time and money fixing the problem than you would have if you had bitten the bullet and used that very reliable, albeit more time consuming and expensive flashing detail, on the other nine jobs. Use the most proven method each time or DON'T DO THE JOB!

The Magic Foam Theory: Why spend time and money on a good roof survey to evaluate the substrate and moisture in a roof? Just spray SPF over it and it will be OK. This is the most dangerous attitude of all. If this roof has problems, the expense of repairing it later could be many times the cost of the original job. Use the best tools available to determine if the existing roof and substrate can be sprayed over without repair or tear-off. Even if the substrate appears OK, some codes require tear-off. Check ahead of time- **before** you get in trouble.

Overspray: The roof looks great and will last for 30 years. But the owner's car, patio, windows, bushes, flowers, and dog have a bright sheen of SPF overspray semi-permanently attached to them. All overspray is preventable. When you cannot shield, or move items to prevent overspray, use windscreens or STOP SPRAYING!

"Get The Work Done" Greed: All SPF roofing requires favorable environmental conditions; not too much wind, moisture, right temperature, etc. Most applicators know how many hours they

can spray each day. If you calculate 5 hours of prime spray time, don't spray for 5-1/2 hours. Make sure you have enough time to coat everything you sprayed and for darn sure, keep an eye on the changing weather.

Surface Preparation: What kind of surface are you spraying to? How do you clean it? What type of contaminants are on it? Does it need a primer? Does it need sandblasting, vacuuming or pressure washing? If you don't have good answers to these questions, you will be going back on a lot of your jobs and your profit goes down the drain.

Wrong System: Yes, you can use the wrong foam, coating or membrane. Identify the performance requirements of the roof before bidding the job. I had a homeowner ask me if his new 25-mil coated SPF roof would hold up well with tables and lawn furniture on it because he used the roof as a patio deck. What was the contractor thinking? Listen to your customer; ask him questions on the expected performance. There are SPF roofing systems that would work for this project, but not what the contractor sold him.

SPF roofing systems have demonstrated exceptional performance in most applications. Do your part to continue the upward trend towards quality work. **Pay attention to the details.**