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**Asphalt Roofing
Manufacturers Association**

A Maintenance Program to Last: Expert Tips for extending the life of an Asphalt Roof

Anyone who drives a car understands that you should change the oil, refill your wiper fluid and check the tire pressure to assure a safe, reliable means of transportation.

Savvy commercial property owners realize that while the roof that protects building occupants and operations may be out of sight, it can never be out of mind. The proper maintenance of a commercial roofing system can mean the difference between years of seamless operations and everything from the disruption that accompanies major roof repairs to the risk of employee safety if maintenance items are deferred.

A roof is expected to retain its waterproofing protection under some fairly significant challenges. All the seasonal changes we enjoy can wreak havoc on a roofing system. Everything from wind-driven rain, to winter snow and the freeze-thaw cycle that accompanies it, to months of searing heat, to physical abuse common in servicing mechanical equipment that resides on the roof. A typical maintenance program can identify damage before it becomes a leak and save property owners time, hassles and money.



Additionally, if a building owner has purchased a warranty or a warranty is provided for the roofing system, then it is exceedingly important to read and understand the terms and conditions of the warranty. A manufacturer's or contractor's warranty is like any other legal document and has stipulations that need to be met in order for the warranty to be up held.

According to the [ARMA/NRCA Manual for Inspection and Maintenance of Built-up and Modified Bitumen Roof Systems: A Guide for Building Owners](#), there are a variety of reasons that a warranty may be voided by the manufacturer or contractor. These reasons may include, but are not limited to:

- Neglect of the roof system by not performing inspections, repairs and routine maintenance in a timely manner;
- Failure by the owner to notify the warrantor of leaks in the roof system (most warranties will explicitly state a time);

- Failure of the owner to notify the warrantor prior to the installation of new rooftop equipment or any other modifications to the roof system;
- Failure to have permanent repairs or maintenance performed in accordance with warrantor's instructions, such as:
 - Use of materials not manufactured or approved by the warrantor, or the use of an incompatible material for a repair;
 - Work performed by a contractor not approved or authorized by the roof system manufacturer;
 - A change in the use of the building;
 - A change in ownership of the building — many warranties are non-transferable

Therefore, it is essential that a building owner understand the terms and conditions of these documents and always ask questions about what the possible outcomes of a situation may be on the enforceability of a warranted system.

Many roofing companies and contractors offer preventive maintenance programs as an add-on through a "Service Agreement" to assist the building owner with proper upkeep and maintenance issues and these help relieve the burden of remembering or creating your own maintenance program. Whether you decide to go it alone or retain the service of a roofing professional, there are some general items building owners should consider regarding a maintenance or service program.

Typical Maintenance Programs

While maintenance programs can differ widely by geographic location and roofing system, the following common criteria can help assure that any low-slope roofing system will provide years of reliable, lasting service.

- **Maintain records** to be sure coverage is clearly defined. Make sure contact numbers to inform the contractor of record and, where required, the manufacturers, are readily available.
- **Understand compatibility of repair materials** and that not all materials work on all roofing systems. If the need for a repair is identified, consult your records and confirm that the repair materials to be used are compatible by calling the manufacturer and or contractor.
- **Conduct routine roof inspections** in the Spring and Fall to check for leak sources such as:
 - Open seams at base flashings
 - Deteriorated pitch pans
 - Drains clogged with debris
- **Remove debris** that can cause latent damage. Leaves and branches, bottles and other debris can lead to punctures in a roofing membrane.
- **Examine masonry and metal work** for signs of deterioration and potential water infiltration.

- **Make sure roof top equipment is maintained** in proper working condition and, where necessary, piped to drainage.
 - **HVAC units piped to drainage** help avoid premature deterioration of roofing membranes.
 - **Maintain roof coatings** where appropriate to help protect the roof against the ravages of UV damage and retain energy saving reflectivity.
 - **Minimize roof top traffic** to keep unnecessary traffic off the roof to help avoid potential damage.



Which System Offers the Best Value

So, if any roofing system can be maintained, do the benefits of any one system outweigh another? Redundancy and durability are two of the attributes that make multi-ply asphaltic roofing systems a great choice. "A multi-ply, gravel surfaced, built-up roof system will tolerate all kinds of roof traffic better than any other I've seen," says Terry Glidewell, President of North Carolina based Greensboro Roofing Co. "So on jobs with multiple penetrations and roof top units that require frequent service, to me it's the best choice."

Glidewell continues: "the redundancy innate in either multi-ply modified systems or BUR, give property owners peace of mind, that even if they do miss something on the year's first maintenance inspection, they have double or more the waterproofing protection when they choose an asphaltic systems over single-ply system that may be easily punctured or damaged."

Whether you choose modified bitumen, BUR, or another of the many options in roofing technology available, you must be sure to follow a routine maintenance program to assure years of lasting reliable service from your roofing system.

For further information on maintaining your roofing system, please visit [our website](#).

Information courtesy of Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association (ARMA)

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