



# technical bulletin

**Asphalt Roofing  
Manufacturers Association**

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## ***Decking Recommendations For Built-Up Roofing and Modified Bitumen Membranes***

### **Introduction**

The Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association (ARMA) recommends that the structural roof deck meet certain minimum requirements to be an acceptable substrate for a given roofing membrane. Generally, all decks should be clean, dry, and securely fastened to the building structure with no abrupt level changes exceeding  $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Roof deck deflection should never exceed  $\frac{1}{240}$  of the span under total design loads — including roof top traffic. When designing and applying the roofing system, insurance and/or code requirements must be met.

The following are some of the more specific guidelines ARMA suggests for various roof deck types:

### **I Steel Decks**

Steel decks should be installed in a way that allows the rib spacing to be uniform and straight so that: (a) the roof insulation boards may be laid with side joints parallel (with end joints perpendicular to the ribs); and (b) the roof insulation edge will be supported by the flanges.

Deck specifications should meet the "Factory Mutual Approval Guide" requirements or the Underwriters Laboratories "Building Materials Directory" requirements. Factory Mutual's "Loss Prevention Data Sheet I-28" requirements should also be met.

### **II Wood Decks**

#### **(A) Wood Planks:**

Wood deck material should consist of kiln-dried, tongue and groove, ship-lapped, or splined boards. They should have a minimum of splits and knotholes, and under no circumstances can these boards be warped or cupped. All holes over  $\frac{1}{4}$ " should be appropriately covered. Individual boards must not exceed an 8" width, and must be no less than 1" thick. There should be an  $\frac{1}{8}$ " space between boards to allow for expansion. Wood deck preservatives and/or treatments must be compatible with the type of bitumen being used.

#### **(B) Plywood/Oriented Strand Board:**

Individual roofing manufacturers approve either plywood or oriented strandboard "Performance Rated Panels" for use as sheathing. These panels should be a minimum thickness of  $\frac{7}{16}$ " for oriented strandboard and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " for plywood. The panels must be manufactured with a water resistant adhesive and should be labeled "Exposure 1." There should be a minimum of holes and voids within and on the

**Note:** These recommendations were prepared by and have the approval of the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association for informational purposes only. They are not intended to revoke or change the requirements or specifications of the individual roofing material manufacturers or local, state and federal building officials that have jurisdiction in your area. Any question, or inquiry, as to the requirements, or specifications of a manufacturer, should be directed to the roofing manufacturer concerned.

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surface. The panels should also be marked properly as “*Performance Rated Panels*” by either APA or another recognized testing agency. Install so that all edges are supported, or clipped to the adjacent sheet. **\*Fire treated plywood and particle boards are not recommended!**

### **III Structural: Pre-Cast Concrete Decks**

When the membrane or roof insulation is adhered directly to the deck, use a concrete bituminous primer that meets the membrane manufacturer’s requirements and is compatible with the type of bitumen being used.

### **IV Lightweight Insulating Concrete Decks**

Lightweight insulating concrete decks, which are placed as a slurry, contain more moisture than other roofing substrates. Retained moisture may contribute to problems with the roofing systems installed over such decks when the proper precautions are not taken.

When these decks are used as a substrate for built-up or modified bitumen roofing, the following criteria are recommended:

- The lightweight insulating concrete deck should incorporate form boards or a galvanized, slotted metal deck to provide underside venting. Topside pressure relief is also suggested.
- The base ply of the roofing system should be attached using the appropriate mechanical fasteners.
- Pull-out resistance for fasteners should comply with the membrane manufacturers requirements.
- The deck applicator and deck manufacturer should certify, in writing, that the roof deck was installed in accordance with the deck manufacturer's recommendations, and is satisfactory to receive the roofing system.
- The roofing contractor should install the roof in accordance with the roofing manufacturer's recommendations for application over lightweight insulating concrete decks.

### **V Structural: Wood Fiber**

These decks should be bonded by binders that are not affected by water. The units should be attached to the building structure with mechanical fasteners to prevent movement, and to provide the required uplift resistance. The base ply should be attached using fasteners recommended by the structural wood fiber and base ply manufacturers.

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