



In these tough times, the first question owners should ask themselves when deciding whether to re-roof or maintain the present structure is quite simply: What can I afford to do?

The decision is commonly more one of finance or affordability rather than necessity. Installment and replacement costs should be incentive enough to extend the full use of a roof. The purpose of any roof is to protect the building and its contents, and this consideration makes the value of the investment grow even larger.

That does not mean that property managers and building owners will never have to re-roof their buildings, because from the day the roof is installed environmental factors work against it. At some point, there will be no choice because these factors, along with tolerance frequency of leaks, inconvenience to plant operations, effects on working conditions, potential structural damage and the normal process of aging of the roof become the criteria for making the decision as to when to re-roof.

Prudent property managers / owners will not wait until a disaster strikes and then decide that a preventive maintenance program was a good idea. A proficient manager, working on an owner's behalf will become familiar with the existing roofing conditions. Budgeting for the major expense of re-roofing can be allocated over a number of years, providing the necessary steps for maintenance, for example a preventive maintenance program which is initiated in a timely fashion.

Ideally, when a roof is five years old, a bi-annual inspection of the existing roof areas should be established. This will allow owners to locate defects in their roofs before these trouble spots can evolve into serious roof problems. The establishment of a roof maintenance program will head off serious roof failures and extend the serviceable life of the roof to its maximum design life expectancy. Ignored roofs will need replacement in less than half of their rated life, and preventive maintenance programs can reduce the cost of re-roofing by 50% or more.

There are three basic components to a roof maintenance program:

1. inspection - identifies what maintenance is required
2. record keeping - documents the process
3. maintenance - implements corrective action

A good manager / owner can also determine whether a roof can be repaired by keeping accurate records on how well the roof has been performing. Appropriate judgement in conjunction with a qualified roofing contractor to assess the roof can ascertain when a roof is nearing the end of its serviceable life. Uncorrected, a defect can rapidly grow into a major problem. Locating and noting these problem areas while still minor in nature is only half of the solution. Getting the repair done as soon as possible is the other half of the solution.

In fact, a study done by the Ontario Housing Corporation on the shortened average life of conventional roofing systems said in part, "Only a proper maintenance program can prolong the life span of a roof ... it is certain that all facets governing roof installations, including poor roof design, specification, application, material and inspection, as well as inadequate maintenance and repair programs must be cumulatively held suspect". However, these statements are true of all roofing products and systems. The roofer that a property manager or building owner chooses is ultimately responsible for the end result and, therefore, has more to lose or gain by making the right choices. The key is to find a reputable, reliable roofing contractor with whom to work in the establishment of a satisfactory roof preventive maintenance program.

In summary, in deciding whether to repair or re-roof, the property manager / owner is the ultimate judge. If the roof in question has enjoyed an established and faithfully adhered to preventive maintenance program, then the need to re-roof can most likely be postponed until the full life expectancy of the roof been achieved.

Property managers / owners would be wise to align themselves with a qualified roofing contractor, trust its expertise, and together develop a plan that suits both financial and business needs. When selecting that appropriate roofing contractor, several things should be taken into consideration:

- 1. How long has the roof been in business?**
- 2. Financial stability**
- 3. References (follow through by checking) and reputation**
- 4. Safety record**

An investment in time in the selection of a roofing contractor and the establishment of a maintenance program will prove to be the best investment in achieving the serviceable life expectancy of a roof.