



# Recoating Considerations and Coating Maintenance

Roof coatings are available with a wide range of properties and consistencies to fit a multitude of purposes.

- Low viscosity, non-fibered coatings: formulated as penetrating primers and damp proofing coatings.
- Medium viscosity, fibered and non-fibered coatings and cements: formulated as interply adhesives and top coatings for use on commercial, industrial, and residential roofs. Some of these coatings incorporate pigments to reflect the damaging rays of the sun, creating a longer performing and more energy-efficient roof.
- High viscosity, heavy bodied cements: designed for adhering waterproofing membranes and components, and for patching and repairing leaks.

The primary advantages of roof coatings and cements are their economical, proven performance lives, and ease of use. Roof coatings and cements are generally one-component products that can be applied directly from the container.



Metal roof with coating prep work completed at joints and fasteners



Reflective roof coating applied to a metal roof



Reflective roof coating applied to a single-ply roof

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER ROOF MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

Like other building products and components, a roof coating may require regular maintenance and appropriate repair to provide long-term service life. The Roof Coatings Manufacturers Association (RCMA) recommends that a roof, including the coating, be inspected twice each year, in the spring and fall, and after major storms or high wind events. Additional coating may need to be applied to repair damage to the coating and underlying roofing substrate. As the coating wears away, additional coating can be applied. Refer to the specific coating manufacturer's requirements for coating and re-coating applications.

## APPLYING A ROOF COATING AT THE PROPER TIME OF THE EXISTING ROOFING SYSTEM'S LIFECYCLE

- Coating New Roofs: to add a reflective roof coating to reduce energy costs.
- Coating Existing Roofs: to extend roof life, when the roof still has significant remaining service life.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXISTING ROOFING SYSTEM WARRANTY PRIOR TO APPLICATION OF A ROOF COATING

A roof coating buyer should be aware of any active warranties for a new or existing roof. Installation of a coating may violate the warranty during the period it is in force. The terms and conditions of a warranty should provide a process for installation of accessory roof components, including application of a coating. Before installation, contact the warrantor and get written authorization that the coating to be installed will not void the warranty. The roofing manufacturer may require a pre- or post-inspection, as well as specific steps to prepare the roof for the coating application.

## HOW TO DETERMINE IF A ROOF IS A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR COATING

A coating installed on a new roof should:

- Be a component of the overall roof system. Roofing manufacturers sell systems; components are compatible and tested collectively. Use a roof coating that is part of the warranted system.
- Wait to be installed until the roof has appropriately weathered and likely will require a primer for adequate adhesion on new asphaltic roof systems.

A coating installed on an existing roof should:

- Have remaining service life. A coating cannot add life back into a roof, but can prevent a roof from aging as quickly as it would without the coating, therefore extending a roof's service life.
- Be compatible with the existing roof.
- Drain properly. Areas of ponding water should be repaired / modified prior to coating. Some coatings do not hold up well under areas of ponded water. While coatings may potentially stop minor leaks, the roof should be properly repaired and dried prior to coating application. Coatings may be able to seal pinhole leaks, which are leaks not visible to the naked eye. If the roof is leaking, the roof leak will need to be identified and repaired prior to any recoating; do not expect the coating to find and seal the leaks.

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## WHAT'S BENEATH THE SURFACE?

Membrane roofs are commonly installed over an insulation layer. Wet roof insulation needs to be removed and replaced prior to applying a roof coating. If a roof is having or has had leaks, it is possible there are areas of wet insulation. In some cases, wet insulation is noticeable simply by walking on it. It is better to use a more exacting method to find areas of wet insulation, such as an infrared scan.

Metal roofs are commonly installed over a solid roof deck or over purlins and insulation. Observing the underside of the roof system can help identify areas of deteriorated deck, wet insulation, or other damage that should be repaired prior to coating application.

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## PROPER PREPARATION FOR ROOF TYPES

The roof must be thoroughly cleaned and allowed to dry thoroughly to ensure a successful coating application. Be careful not to damage the membrane seams. Care should be taken when pressure washing to not disturb the integrity of the underlying roof membrane, particularly where there are adhered seams. Refer to the relevant coating manufacturer's specific requirements for roof preparation.

A primer is no substitute for thorough cleaning. Dust, chalking film, bitumen exudate, greases or oils, and other loose debris should be cleaned off the roof prior to the application of coatings. Any required roof or flashing repairs should be completed and allowed to adequately cure.

However, sometimes primers are required, depending on substrate and type of coating. Refer to your coating manufacturer for specific requirements. Surfaces which generally require primer include: metal flashings, gravel stops, and other metal edging, concrete roof decks, masonry walls and floors, gypsum, and other porous surfaces.

Rusted metal roofs can be coated after the rust conditions have been addressed. If the roof is "white rust" (zinc or aluminum), it can be coated after cleaning. If the roof is "red rust," the rust must be removed or treated with a corrosion inhibiting primer. All rusted fasteners should be treated or replaced.

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## ROOFING PROFESSIONALS VERSUS IN-HOUSE STAFF

RCMA strongly recommends that the semi-annual inspections be performed by a roofing professional authorized and capable of making repairs. In-house staff should observe the roof on a regular basis, ensuring a roof is free of debris, especially around drains and in gutters. Do not use in-house staff to perform work that is required by a warranty to be performed by a professional roofing contractor.

For roofs without a warranty, small repairs and coating can be applied by a properly trained building owner or by an experienced roof coatings applicator. However, a roofing contractor is strongly recommended if there are such issues as existing leaks, wet insulation, or damaged deck. Check with the roofing manufacturer and/or warranty program requirements.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, please contact John Ferraro, RCMA Executive Director, at [jferraro@roofcoatings.org](mailto:jferraro@roofcoatings.org) or 202-207-1121.