

A quest for clarity

A new NRCA task force is reviewing manufacturers' installation instructions

by Mark S. Graham

As roofing products and roof systems become increasingly proprietary and complex, proper installation instructions are an important consideration. Roofing product and roof system manufacturers generally are responsible for providing users with instructions explaining how to properly install their products.

Instructions for some products are not written at a level appropriate for intended users

Instructional variance

Although some manufacturers make their product-specific installation instructions readily accessible to users, instructions for some products are difficult to locate and not written at a level appropriate for the intended users—field applicators.

Most asphalt shingle manufacturers, for example, imprint product-specific installation instructions on shingle bundle wrappers. Some manufacturers print instructions in multiple languages in recognition some installers may not speak or read English.

Installation instructions for other products and systems, such as single-ply membranes, generally are not included with the product or product packaging. For these products, users need to rely on manufacturers' printed literature or websites for system-specific installation instructions. Some website-housed application instructions are difficult or nearly impossible to locate on manufacturers' websites. In addition, some online formats are not compatible with mobile devices, which a field applicator likely would use for access.

Also, the intended users and amount of information included in manufacturers' installation instructions vary significantly.

I recently downloaded installation instructions from several manufacturers for a conventional built-up membrane roof system specification. One manufacturer has a single-page instruction sheet indicating the intended components, application rates, cautions and limitations, as well as a graphic illustration of ply-line layout.

Another manufacturer's instructions for a similar built-up membrane specification consists of a 37-page, text-only document that includes minimal installation-specific instruction but detailed structural roof deck, wind-uplift resistance and fire-rating design information. Such an installation instruction document is of little use to field applicators and appears to be an attempt to shift some design responsibility to roofing contractors and field applicators.

Code requirements

Most building codes include specific provisions requiring roofing products and roof systems to be installed according to manufacturers' installation instructions.

For example, in Chapter 15—Roof Assemblies and Rooftop Structures of the *International Building Code, 2015 Edition* (IBC), Section 1506—Materials includes the following statement: "... Roof coverings shall be applied in accordance with this chapter and the manufacturer's installation instructions" Section 1507—Requirements for Roof Coverings includes similar requirements.

Chapter 9—Roof Assemblies of the *International Residential Code, 2015 Edition* (IRC) includes similar provisions in Section R904—Materials and Section R905—Requirements for Roof Coverings.

Previous editions of IBC and IRC contained similar provisions.

Manufacturers' installation instructions specifically are required by building codes, which underscores the importance of the instructions being easily accessible, relevant and easily understandable to roofing contractors' field personnel.

NRCA review task force

This year, NRCA established a Manufacturers' Application Instruction Review Task Force to review manufacturers' installation instructions and provide manufacturers with input and suggestions for improvement. A specific objective of the task force is to make manufacturers' installation instructions more useful to field personnel.

It bears noting the concept of an NRCA installation instruction review task force is not new. NRCA had a similar task force during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and it was primarily focused on achieving consistency in manufacturers' application instructions for coal tar- and asphalt-based built-up systems. That effort eventually evolved into the development (with several manufacturers and, later, the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association) of NRCA's application quality control document.

During NRCA's Fall Committee Meetings, which will be held Nov. 14-17 in Chicago, the task force will meet with several manufacturers to discuss and, NRCA hopes, improve installation instructions. Although this meeting is an initial step, the effort is intended to be an ongoing, long-term undertaking by NRCA addressing all common roofing products and roof systems. We look forward to working with manufacturers in this effort. 🌟🌟🌟

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