

## Facilitator — February/March 2016



### Up on the Roof

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#### Tips for a successful roofing project

A restaurant's success relies on a winning menu and a good operations crew, but the roof is just as important. Having the right components and a well-functioning team are key when installing a roof on a new building, re-roofing an existing facility or conducting roofing repairs. The roofing system is an asset that should be considered a long-term investment for your facility.

#### The Roofing System

A new roofing project for a restaurant is often complex and multifaceted because rooftops have several vents, exhaust fans, HVAC units and other penetrations. As such, there are many opportunities for leaks to develop at the transition points. Some roofing system manufacturers offer stack and curb flashings that are custom fabricated in the factory. This process reduces rooftop installation labor and helps ensure a good watertight fit at those critical roof areas.

In addition to the roof's watertight capabilities, there are other important considerations for selecting a new restaurant roof:

- Once installed, some roof systems can require extensive maintenance, such as re-coating, re-surfacing or re-spraying after a few years for the system to perform properly and/or to retain warranty coverage. A low-cost initial installation may result in additional costs down the road.
- It's common, of course, for restaurants to have rooftop grease exhaust, so the roof system should be made from materials that can withstand animal fat and grease. Because of their chemical makeup, some commercial roofing systems are better at this than others and can minimize or eliminate the degradation that occurs when certain materials come into contact with grease.
- Energy-efficient roof systems with high reflectivity can significantly reduce the stress put on rooftop HVAC units by lowering the temperature of the air around those units. The HVAC systems don't have to work as hard to cool the ambient air before transferring it into the restaurant. This can lower energy costs and reduce cooling system loads and HVAC maintenance requirements.

#### The Team

When it comes to installing a roofing system on a commercial building, several parties may be involved, including the facility owner/manager, the roofing contractor, the manufacturer and even the roof manufacturer's representative. Assembling the right roofing team can help ensure that the job proceeds smoothly and the finished product lives up to expectations.

On the purchasing side, include those who will approve the installation and the project's budget. Depending on the company, this may include the facility manager, building owner, purchasing manager, company owner or head of finance.

Perhaps the most critical member of the team is the roofing contractor, because he or she will be the restaurant facility manager's single point of contact—before, during and after the installation, even for multi-location restaurant chains.

For re-roofing projects, the contractor should complete a thorough evaluation of the current roof to uncover any problems and potential challenges, and then discuss all findings with the rest of the team. The contractor should ask about any constraints the crew might face during installation, such as times during the day when the installation might interfere with business operations or if limited roof access will make the loading of materials difficult.

Before hiring a contractor, a building owner should ask several questions, including:

- Can the contractor provide references from satisfied customers?
- What experience does the contractor have with similar installations?
- What is their experience with the product that's being installed?
- Does the contractor carry liability insurance?
- What are the specifics of the roof manufacturer's warranty? Does it include coverage for ponding water and consequential damages?

- Does the contractor offer a supplemental warranty of their own?

The roofing system manufacturer is a good resource that restaurant owners and managers can tap into for contractor information. Many have implemented installation rating systems and contractor recognition programs that are intended to give facility professionals confidence that the roofing system will be installed with high standards. To qualify for these programs, a contractor typically must have installed the manufacturer's roofing system on a variety of buildings and achieved consistently high quality inspection scores over several years.

At a minimum, the contractor should be expected to provide crews that are qualified for the job, supply the equipment that's necessary to complete the project and have vehicles that can haul refuse away at the end of each day. Perhaps most important, the contractor should have safety equipment, such as guard rails and fall protection harnesses, for employees to use while completing the roofing installation.

Together, the building owner/manager and contractor should also review several variables that will help ensure a smooth-running project, including the location of a staging area for tools and materials, the expected duration of the installation and what (if any) building disruptions can be expected, daily work hours for the crew and a number to call if problems occur outside of normal business hours.

The roof manufacturer's representative also can be a liaison between manufacturer, contractor and facility manager. The rep adds value by:

- Helping to source complete systems that include metal details, insulation, skylights or other roofing system components.
- Enabling the installation of photovoltaic systems, a rooftop garden or covered roof assemblies (e.g., tile products for rooftop dining areas) by bringing in vendors for those products as necessary.
- Facilitating communication between the other team members and bringing in other information and expertise (e.g., technical or engineering support) as required to ensure the project proceeds smoothly.

#### After the Installation

Once the roof has been installed, the facility manager's job isn't over. Many commercial roofing warranties require regular inspections and repairs in order to maintain warranty coverage. Most roofing manufacturers provide instructions on how to maintain their systems, and they should be followed carefully to maintain the warranty. It's important to note that some manufacturers will only allow maintenance and repairs to be performed by the original installing contractor, or the warranty will be voided.

Some roofing systems are virtually maintenance-free, requiring little or no upkeep when designed and installed correctly. However, even roofs that need only a small level of maintenance can benefit from periodic, common-sense inspections to help keep drains and gutters flowing, clear vegetative overgrowth, and prevent ponding water and third-party damage, especially following storms and other weather events. One approach is to have the contractor and building owner establish a yearly inspection and maintenance program to help ensure the performance and longevity of the roofing system.

Your restaurant's roof really is a multicomponent system with many factors that contribute to its lifespan of 15 to 20 years, or even longer. Make sure that you choose the right roofing system and have the right team in place to ensure that your roof is installed properly and will provide years of watertight protection.

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