

# **Your Warranty Opportunities and How to Use Them Efficaciously**

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## **Abstract**

This paper will discuss three basic opportunities that can make you indispensable to the building owner. First, by understanding their roofing system you can give them proper direction in addressing what they are seeing on their roof. Second, by knowing the roofing system that they have on their building, you can properly scan the roof and help the building owner understand what they are seeing in the images. Finally, by understanding something about their roofing system and their roof warranty, you can help them know what to expect from their roofing system's manufacturer.

## **Introduction**

In the roofing business, from the manufacturer's perspective, the warranty is fraught with the perils of the next sale. When the building owner calls to report a leak on their roof, the salesman can quickly become involved because their livelihood is at stake. Everyone expects the "large manufacturing company" to shell out cash to make repairs, no matter what the actual issue entails. It seems everyone expects something for nothing.

So, how can this work to your advantage with a premium service to the building owner? What services can you provide to the building owner? If you are willing to spend a little extra time, you can learn several simple aspects of roof systems that will aid you in your ability to properly scan a roof, and help you provide better service to the building owner.

As with anything, you don't want a plumber fixing your car, a mechanic fixing your computer, or small children playing with your best infrared imager. You want to provide a service to the building owner that is concise and clear. Be the last person they seek information from, and their first point of contact. If you provide the information that they need, they won't seek it elsewhere.

## Discussion

Knowing the basics about a roofing system and the various components that are used will help you understand what issues may occur. The basic items that you will find beneath the surface are: a deck, an insulation package, and usually a cover board. Knowing how these basic items are installed and how they interact can help you with your scan.

A metal deck acts differently than a concrete deck, so the insulation package is installed differently. Knowing if the insulation package is loose-laid, mechanically attached or hot mopped is useful. Knowing if a fiberglass, wood fiber or perlite cover board was used is vital information. The cover board component is typically where you will find the heat signatures. These may be visible to your imager in a variety of shapes, but will usually appear with squared off corners in some areas.

For a successful scan to be performed there must be the proper heat-loading and then the appropriate cooling before the scan is performed. If there is no source to hold the heat, there will be serious limitations to what you will be able to see. There are some systems that install the insulation above the roof membranes. I am not addressing those here.

The roof membrane system that is installed over the deck and insulation then comes into play. Do they have a single-ply, a BUR (built-up roof), a MBUR (Modified BUR) or a Mod Bit (Modified Bitumen) roof membrane system? Each of these will display different characteristics in a scan.

Many of the single-ply roof membranes are reflective in nature and do not scan well with longwave imagers. If you do not have access to a shortwave imager, you may want to direct the owner to a friend who has one. As the single-ply membrane is installed directly over the insulation board, many without a cover board, the scan is not always as useful in determining roof leaks.

Spots may be visible if caught at the right time, but walking the roof in daylight may be just as effective.

Having some basic tools and training will enable you to spot deficiencies and problems with the naked eye. You will only need a camera for documentation of what you find, and maybe a marking tool to indicate the location where you found the item. Many companies provide free basic training sessions through their local distributors or warehouses.

BUR & MBUR roofs typically consist of several layers of felts being set in hot asphalt with a top surfacing. These surfacings include: coatings, flood coat and gravel (FCG) or a mod bit cap ply (MBUR). These can each present difficulties in the scan, but can be performed successfully.

Difficulties include: reflectivity issues with the coatings, uneven coatings that may give false readings and gravel that is unevenly spread will give strange readings. The Mod Bit roof system will usually present the easiest opportunity for a successful longwave scan. There are some Mod Bit roofs that do not include a cover board, or that use a cover boards that absorb little or no moisture. Knowing the make-up of the roof system is very important to your success.

Depending on the installation procedures, some things that you may observe could include: areas where excess asphalt was poured on top of the base ply or is unevenly distributed during installation may appear as “hot spots”. Patches that were installed on the base ply may look like a wet insulation board. Small depressions may collect dirt or granules and appear as an anomaly. Some depressions may hold water and create an area that cannot be scanned properly. These are all areas that should be noted and documented. Some of these will be seen during your daylight visit to the site, others will become evident during the scan.

So, what are some things that are not typically covered by the manufacturer’s warranty? Usually any items that are not supplied by or manufactured by their facilities will not be covered under the terms of their warranty. What does this mean? When you put Ford brake parts on your new Chevy, neither Ford nor Chevy will warrant them against failure or damage.

On the roof, there are many items that are provided by others. Some of these include: lead pipe boots, pitch boxes, edge metal, gutters, and caulking. Damage to the roof system from most of these items will typically not be covered by the membrane manufacturer. Other things that may be seen when walking a low-slope roof could include: blisters, bullets and ballast, plants, punctures or preliminary aging. These should be brought to the owner’s attention so that proper maintenance or repairs can occur.

As with any warranty, if the manufacturer is not contacted in a timely fashion they have the right to deny the claim. The time factor is very important to most manufacturers. The longer any issue is left untended, the greater the damage to the rest of the system that is beneath the watertight membrane.

A simple method to understanding what is expected from the roofing manufacturer is to read their care and maintenance guide. There is usually a one-page list that goes out with the warranty which indicates what the owner should do for basic maintenance of the roof. These are also readily available online.

By showing this to the owner and reviewing it with him, you can aid him in what his expectations might include. I have often heard that the owner should “let the big company pay for everything,” but the manufacturers wouldn’t be able to stay in business if they “just pay for everything.” This does not make for a good business model.

Through the review process of the maintenance guide and walking the roof during daylight hours, you should be able to point out if there are any deficiencies and possibly recommend a friend to make any repairs. Any maintenance that comes in direct contact with the roof membrane should be performed by a certified or authorized contractor. Also, repairs to any roofing system components must follow the manufacturer's approved repair methods.

I often see improper repairs made at the owner's request or made following some type of roofing system testing. If you make a hole in the watertight membrane, be sure you are authorized to make repairs and that any repairs you make are done with the correct products and methods. If improperly made, you give the manufacturer the right to deny any claims associated with issues in that area.

## **Conclusion**

There are many good opportunities for you to increase your business. You may have to study some paperwork or read a couple of documents, but you can make yourself invaluable to building owners by providing them with proper information and expectations.