



Ray Corbin

Tear-Off or Upgrade?

A Decision and an Opportunity for Landfill Space Savings

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The role of the consultant/specifier continues to evolve in today's roofing practice. One area of change includes the growth of opportunities for consultants to assist clients and improve the environment through better roofing choices, sometimes with little or moderate additional cost. A good example presents itself whenever the existing asphalt shingle roof needs replacement but conditions will allow an upgrade and nail-over instead of a costly tear-off and reroof.

Tear-offs are costly to the owner as well as the environment in terms of existing landfill capacity. The decision today to delay adding tear-off debris to our existing landfills can pay dividends for everyone. States such as New Jersey are actively pursuing recycling of roof-

ing waste; however the technology and break-even costs are still a number of years away.

When involved with an asphalt shingle roof, the knowledgeable consultant can take advantage of the tear-off versus upgrade opportunity by examining a number of factors:

- 1) whether the local code will allow another nail-over roof,
- 2) the ability of the existing structure to support an additional roof, and
- 3) whether or not the problem roof is smooth enough (or can be made smooth enough) for another shingle — preferably a heavier, three-dimensional shingle — to be nailed over it.

The cost savings on the tear-off labor and dump fee will usually offset the increase in material and labor for the heavier shingle. Also, the waste problems and inconvenience of the tear-off plus the potential related damage are eliminated.

The value of such a re-cover is immediately obvious to the owner, since the new, three-dimensional shingle dramatically increases curb appeal relative to more traditional 3-tab roofs. For the owner of a large complex (e.g., multiple apartments), the added beauty and style of the three-dimensional roof can mean quicker and often higher unit rentals. On

the more practical level, owners appreciate the fact that more of their reroofing dollar remains on the roof and not in the already overloaded municipal landfill.

As a first step, the consultant must establish that local codes will permit the added roof. Some codes allow up to two additional roofs over the initial installation. Of course, the consultant should specify indexing of the shingle along with nails of sufficient length to penetrate the deck. With most codes, the weight of the new roof fits well within the design dead load of 20 pounds/square foot. Thus, the added weight of the new roof, about 240 pounds/square, will only add 2.4 pounds/square foot — a minor increase. Even two additional asphalt shingle roofs will total somewhere around 5 pounds/square foot, or only 25 percent of the dead load allowable.

When reroofing, another key to owner satisfaction is careful attention to the flashings. Examine the existing flashings to determine if they are serviceable and able to perform for the life of the new roof. In almost all cases, it is best to replace all flashings, especially with the three-dimensional shingle which can be expected to provide many years of leak-free performance. (Refer to "Let's Pay Attention to Shingle Flashing Details" in the September 1992 issue of *Interface*.)

Once the code requirement is met, a check of the under-deck area will determine if the structure is sound. If portions of the decking need to be replaced, the best solution would be to tear-off, replace the necessary decking, and then re-cover.

As long as the code and structure requirements are met, the consultant can then select the three-dimensional shingle that will both enhance the building's roof line and adequately cover any irregularities of the existing asphalt shingle

roof. If some areas are rough, they can be prepared (nailed down or tabs removed) so that the re-cover achieves a uniform smoothness over the entire roof surface.

The benefits of a nail-over versus a tear-off should be obvious to both the consultant and the owner. Tear-offs present a messy and unpleasant situation for the owner. Tear-offs can also leave large portions of the roof exposed to the elements, a condition which may result in interior damage. By replacing a three-

tab asphalt shingle with a new, three-dimensional asphalt shingle, other owners in the area will have tangible evidence of the aesthetic value of a roof upgrade. The result can be increased opportunity for the consultant.

In the final analysis, an upgrade versus a tear-off represents a decision that owners must ultimately make. At the same time, however, the consultant can bring to the table the skills and experience that may help assure the best choice.

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