



Roof System Warranties

The state-of-the-art roof systems currently installed are the result of more than a century of research and innovation. The relatively recent introduction of numerous roof systems using rubbers, plastics, modified asphalts and other synthetic materials caused manufacturers to focus attention on warranties they offer. In addition, some employ long-term warranties as marketing tools. In the interest of roofing consumers, the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) acknowledges the following concerns relative to manufacturers' roof system warranties.

A roof system warranty's length should not be the primary criterion in the selection of a roofing product or roof system because the warranty does not necessarily provide assurance of satisfactory roof system performance. The selection of a roof system application should be based on the product's qualities and suitability for the prospective project. A long-term warranty may be of little value to a consumer if the roof system does not perform satisfactorily and leaks. Conversely, if a roof system is designed, constructed and manufactured well, the expense of purchasing a warranty may not be necessary.

Manufacturers who use long-term warranties as marketing tools have found themselves compelled to meet or exceed warranties of competitive manufacturers. In some cases, the length of the warranty may have been established without appropriate technical research or documentation of in-place field performance.

Increased liability risk associated with long-term warranties has contributed to the recent demise of some manufacturers. This may result in unanticipated and costly expenses for extensive roof system repairs for roofing consumers. Unfortunately, there are a number of manufacturers that issued long-term warranties and no longer are operating companies with the capability of honoring their warranty commitments, leaving consumers with an ineffective warranty and serious roofing problems.

There is a common misconception by roofing consumers that long-term warranties are all-inclusive insurance policies designed to cover virtually any roofing problem regardless of the cause or circumstance. Roof system warranties typically do not warrant that the roof system will not leak or is suitable for the project where it is installed. Even the most comprehensive manufacturer warranties that cover materials and workmanship generally provide only that the manufacturer will repair leaks that result from specific causes specified in the warranty. A material-only warranty typically provides only that the manufacturer will provide replacement material.

Warranty documents often contain restrictive provisions that significantly limit the warrantor's liability and consumer's remedies in the event that problems develop. The warranty document may also contain other restrictions and limitations, such as a prohibition against assignment or transfer of the warranty, exclusion of damages resulting from a defective roof system and monetary limitations.

Long-term warranties largely are reactive (rather than proactive) solutions to roof problems. In general, they tend to undermine a prudent owner's initial concern for proper roofing specifications and application, as well as an owner's subsequent responsibility for periodic roof maintenance.

Roofing consumers are best served by manufacturers who:

- Focus their sales efforts primarily on the relevant and proven merits of those products and systems best designed to serve the specific needs of a roofing consumer
- Base warranties for membranes or systems solely on an honest and realistic appraisal of their proven service lives, contingent upon the financial ability and good faith of the issuer to honor those warranties for the duration of the warranty term

- Clearly and conspicuously state in writing all recommended and required owner maintenance responsibilities during the projected service life of the roof system and warranty term
- Solicit from a roofing consumer a clear understanding of the consumer's primary responsibility to provide periodic routine maintenance during the service life of the roof membrane or system

NRCA believes roofing consumers, with the assistance of NRCA-member roofing professionals, should focus their purchase decisions primarily on objective and comparative analyses of proven roof system options that best serve their specific roofing requirements and not on warranty time frames.

NRCA, a nonprofit trade association, is one of the construction industry's most respected organizations and the voice and leading authority in the roofing industry for information, education, technology and advocacy.

NRCA offers a service to help building owners locate NRCA-member professional roofing contractors in specific geographic areas. NRCA's website allows roofing consumers to search for roofing contractors by ZIP code, type of roof system and radius; it also provides a wide range of information and services to help building owners and homeowners make informed decisions about replacing and maintaining their roof systems. This information can be obtained from NRCA's website at www.nrca.net.

