

Roofing holds the key to saving on energy, budget

Boardman, May 21, 2009 — Cool roofs. White roofs. Vegetative roofs. Solar roofs. Sifting through the latest trends in the commercial roofing industry can be difficult, but the one trend that doesn't go out of style is saving money. With an energy efficient or sustainable roof, building owners and managers can reduce company costs and save energy.

According to the Whitestone Building Maintenance and Repair Cost Reference, energy costs rose 29.4 percent in 2007 and in the beginning months of 2008, costs increased 34.7 percent. The biggest culprit in energy consumption is wet insulation. Mike Dohar of Simon Roofing Products estimates that wet insulation from even minor leaks can increase energy losses up to 70 percent. When insulation becomes wet, it loses its thermal resistance, which in the end translates to higher heating and cooling costs. A 10,000 sq. ft. roof may waste an additional \$23,800 - \$64,800 annually due to wet insulation, according to Dohar. This wasted energy cost assumes the entire 10,000 sq. ft. roof has wet insulation.

The key to energy savings lies in the insulation. Properly installed and well-maintained insulation will save building managers thousands of dollars throughout the years. And keeping up to date on its condition will help to maintain the roofing system.

Dohar said that Simon Roofing, a national commercial roofing company, has worked to incorporate energy savings into its products. "Our value added products can be customized to specific applications to provide solutions to the customer's problem, such as energy savings," Dohar said.

When searching for a roofing system to cut down on energy costs and increase the savings, Dohar recommends two types of systems — a sustainable roof or an energy saving roof.

An energy efficient roof, such as a cool or metal roof creates an immediate decrease in energy and operating costs because of the lower temperature on the roofs. As the HVAC brings in warm air on the roof, it must work harder to lower the temperature using more energy. When the air on the roof is already at a lower temperature due to the cool roof, the HVAC will use less energy. However, this option does not work in all climates throughout the country and is much more favorable in warmer parts of the country. A cooler more energy efficient 10,000 sq. ft. roof may save approximately \$1,000 to \$3,000 annually in total energy costs.

A second option — sustainable roofs — has a much longer lifespan and sees more of an energy savings throughout the years. Since this roofing system last longer than a typical roof, fewer disposals are needed.

Brian Dolansky, Simon Roofing Environmental Director, said that sustainable practices are catching on in cities throughout the country. “Sustainable practices are being adopted and mandated every day by city, state and federal entities,” he said.

Regardless of the roofing system, insulation plays a major role in the success of energy savings. The costs associated with wet insulation and the loss of energy will put a damper on any operating budget. Through energy saving roofing solutions and keeping insulation up to speed, building owners and managers can better manage energy costs.