irwin siegel agency
RISK MANAGEMENT DIVISION

A roof is your first line of defense from the sun, wind, rain, hail, sleet, and snow. While the roof protects you from these elements, they can also damage the roof system.

An effective roof system is based on its design, quality of materials used in construction, expert installation, and an ongoing preventive maintenance program. To achieve the expected life span and to keep it watertight, your roof requires regular inspection and periodic maintenance.

ROOF MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

Some aspects of roof maintenance do not need to be performed by roofing professionals but can be done by the building's maintenance personnel. Your maintenance staff can help with some of the basic maintenance items including keeping the roof free of debris. Plant material and other items can block the designed flow of water to the roof drains and cause localized ponding. Ponding and standing water can prematurely damage a roof system. It is recommended that a roof be inspected every 6 months. These inspections should ideally take place in the spring and fall of the year.

A roof system requires regular inspections and periodic maintenance based on an inspection by a qualified roofing contractor. Additional inspections may be needed after severe storms. Maintenance personnel and the roofing contractor should provide a written report with observations of any noted conditions and/or recommendations to make improvements when inspections are completed.

ROOF INSPECTION CHECKLIST

While we think of a roof as the parts easily seen, it is important to understand that the roof extends beyond just the covering. The roof system includes, but is not limited to, the underlying roof deck, insulation, fasteners, sheet metal work, drains, expansion joints, skylights, vents and plastic accessories, decorative or reflective coatings, wall coverings, roof surfacing and/or any ballast, rocks or gravel.

Leaks most often occur at the flashings, gravel stops, and other penetrations of the roof. Keeping roof traffic to a minimum should also be a priority for building personnel.

Different types of roof systems require specific points to check. What should we be looking for?

Overall

- Bag and remove all debris
- Do not allow foot traffic on the roof in very hot or very cold weather
- Roof cover damage should be identified and repaired
- Trees do not make contact with building
- Check for leaks in the building
    - The best place to see if water has intruded is the attic or under roof area.

Roof Attachments

- Check roof-to-wall connections in wood frame or unreinforced masonry buildings.
  - Tie down hardware, which meets the current local codes, will provide adequate structural integrity between the walls and roof trusses/rafters.
  - This will assure the building integrity and prevent roof uplift during a windstorm.

Roof Drains

- All roof systems require positive drainage.
  - Building owners must keep roof drains and the surrounding areas free of debris to allow for proper drainage.
  - Review proper attachment of drain systems, gutters, and scuppers.
- Steep-sloped roofs tend to have longer life spans than low-sloped roofs due to the rate at which water leaves the roof surface.

Metal Flashing

- Check for areas of damage or rust.
- Check that the flashing has remained properly attached and sealed.
  - Repair or replace areas with damage, poor caulking, and loose areas including counterflashing, coping, seams and/or joints.
  - These areas include dormers, skylights, hood vents, pipe vents, chimney flashings, and any vertical or perimeter edge flashings.

Rooftop Equipment

- Qualified roofing personnel should accompany any equipment installation and/or service employees.
- An alternative is to have qualified roofing personnel inspect the area after the equipment installation and/or service employees have completed their work.
- Regularly check and maintain the condition of all rooftop equipment.
- Ensure that no substances from the equipment are being deposited on the roof and if deposits are present – clean immediately.
- Check equipment flashing for proper condition.

Roof Coating/Covering

- Visually inspect for signs of deterioration.
  - Maintenance or replacement completed by a roofing professional is essential.
  - Coating life is affected by a variety of factors including climate and environment.
- If possible, view the roof from the interior of the structure to identify leaks or weaknesses.

Repairs and Warranties

It is important for building owners to retain a professional roofing contractor for any repairs or replacement. If a roof system is repaired by in-house maintenance, any warranty on the roof system may be voided. Many warranties on roof systems have direct or indirect exclusions based on lack of maintenance. If a regular maintenance inspection is not performed and documented, damage from water intrusion may be excluded from the warranty if it is determined that the leakage could have been prevented through regular maintenance. This also holds true for insurance claims.

A roof is a complex system of many parts. Once a quality roof system is in place, it will require inspection and maintenance to provide years of life and protection. The money a building owner may save by not performing regular inspection and maintenance will be spent in larger amounts to repair or replace the system before it's expected life.