



AN ALTERNATIVE ROOFING SOLUTION THE UNIFLEX FLUID APPLIED ROOFING SYSTEM

Several years back, partly due to our declining financial climate, more and more building owners were avoiding replacement of aging roofs. I noticed building owners were turning to roofing overlays or roof coatings in an attempt to extend the life of their aging roofs at a lower cost than replacement. Unfortunately, too many owners were significantly disappointed in the results which fell far short of their expectations.

My clients' growing sense of frustration compelled me to seek out a roofing alternative that would not only protect their investment but also provide them with tenant satisfaction, all at an economical cost. So I set out on what became a comprehensive three-year review and analysis of roofing.

Although my initial goal was to find the middle ground between owner ROI and tenant satisfaction, my research quickly made me realize there were no clear cut roofing systems or products that helped me achieve my goal.

The first process I studied was the traditional tear-off and replacement of the roof commonly referred to as re-roofing. I knew from experience the historical re-roof project costs were in the range of \$4.50 to \$8.00 per square foot depending upon complexity.

I also experienced the ever increasing new energy codes that were being adopted were driving costs for these re-roofing projects higher and higher. Many new energy codes typically required the addition of insulation to a majority of buildings in order to comply with new energy standards. The price of these additions was quite shocking. Building owners were quickly realizing that the added insulation was resulting in the additional cost to adjust through-roof protrusions such as plumbing, electrical and venting that now needed to be adjusted or raised to accommodate the added thickness of the insulation. Sticker shock hits when what used to be \$4.50 - \$8.00 per square foot becomes \$8.00 to \$15.00.

With the rising costs of re-roofing, building owners were turning to roofing overlays where only a new membrane is laid over the existing leaky roof to reduce roof replacement costs. This method, if installed properly, can postpone the inevitable tear-off for a period of time. However, the overlay comes with its own set of issues, some of which are (1) the new membrane is still expensive, (2) the 'new roof' overlay must still be treated as a capital improvement and written off over 29-1/2 years, (3) the warranty is limited to a material only warranty unless you can obtain a leak warranty from the installer and (4) the new membrane cover, in most cases, is only a band-aid unless your installer does an excellent job in repairing the old roof prior to covering it.

Overlay costs were typically in the range of \$4 to \$8 per square foot depending on the complexity of the project, and the extent of preparation of the existing surface. The growing concern was in the long term where the lay-

iNNOVATE Group Inc.

333 West Bethalto Dr., #211

Bethalto, IL 62010

www.InnovateGroupInc.com

Innovate ...to do something in a new way...to effect a change in...to have new ideas about how something can be done.

AN ALTERNATIVE ROOFING SOLUTION THE UNIFLEX FLUID APPLIED ROOFING SYSTEM



over only postponed the big issue of roof tear-off and full replacement, with its required code upgrades, but now with an added layer to tear-off. Leak repairs also become frustrating and expensive with an overlay. Not to mention, once water penetrates the overlay, it can sit between the original roof and the new overlay creating numerous additional issues and roof failure scenarios.

As an alternative to the pricy re-roofs and overlays, many building owners turned to roof coatings and as we all know, the market is flooded with coating products and manufacturers promising to stop leaks and prevent further roof deterioration at a fraction of the cost of a tear-off.

In order to consider all alternatives for my building owners, I hesitantly included roof coatings in my study to once and for all determine how cost effective and reliable they are. After all, I had access and data from building owners that had previously installed roof coatings on aging roofs that dated back ten years. I concluded, like so many others before me, that typical coatings are merely thin paints that make surfaces look good until the coating materials break down. And once broken down, the coatings are easily scraped away by weather and human traffic on the roof. Worse, once the coating surface failed, in all cases water quickly found its way into the roofing system and ultimately into the building. Not to mention most coatings failed within the first five years and all failed around the seventh year primarily due to the destructive power of the sun; the coatings could not hold up to the UV rays. The cost of roof coatings was by far the most attractive in the range of \$1.00 to \$2.00 per square foot with the lower price usually representing in-house labor.

Not giving up on my search to find that middle ground, I happened upon a trade article about an elastomeric product that applied as a fluid but dried like a TPO membrane. The article touted that this was the viable option to coatings, overlays and re-roofing and could deliver on the promise to reduce repair and maintenance costs. I was surprised when I read that the roofing product that just captured my attention is owned by Sherwin Williams.

The article was about the Uniflex Fluid Applied Roofing System. A roofing system that is available with a Ten Year NDL Warranty for Labor and Material, issued and backed by the Sherwin Williams Company. That was the part that intrigued me. If Sherwin Williams was willing to issue a 10 year NDL Warranty for material and labor I was willing to learn more about fluid applied roofing systems.

Does Uniflex have a competitor? Yes, there are several other fluid applied roofing systems in the market. However, after review of industry articles, specifications, distribution, ease of application, ease of repair, and the backing of the product; I chose Uniflex.

As promoted Uniflex is a seamless, fully adhered, self-flashing membrane that adheres to virtually all existing roof surfaces including EPDM, Asphalt (built-up and modified bitumen), Metal (standing seam metal and corrugated steel roofs) as well as Sprayed-On Polyurthane Foam and Concrete. Because Uniflex is an elastomeric product, it

iNNOVATE Group Inc.

333 West Bethalto Dr., #211

Bethalto, IL 62010

www.InnovateGroupInc.com

Innovate...to do something in a new way...to effect a change in...to have new ideas about how something can be done.

AN ALTERNATIVE ROOFING SOLUTION THE UNIFLEX FLUID APPLIED ROOFING SYSTEM



is designed to withstand extreme stress from building movement, temperature variation and UV degradation. As a fluid applied system, the membrane that forms when cured weighs only ounces per square foot even though it cures to a dry thickness of 40 to 44 mils. This compares to a 45 mil TPO membrane which has many seams.

Other facts I like about Uniflex are (1) it is considered to be a maintenance item to be written off as an expense item in the year of application, (2) you will never have to face code upgrade because you are not altering the existing grandfathered roof, (3) you will never have to lift roof top equipment ever again, (4) it can restore gutter systems, (5) it is Energy-Star rated and (6) in addition to specific energy-star colors, you can get the product in any color in the Sherwin-Williams fan deck. Because Uniflex only weighs ounces per square foot, the system can be periodically refreshed maintaining the warranty or warranty-like condition again and again and again, thereby doing away with ever having to face a tear-off and replacement. Essentially, any aging roof in poor to fair condition could use Uniflex and extend its lifecycle for 30, 40, or 50 plus years, all under a warranty, if so desired.

Still I was skeptical, so I kept quiet about the Uniflex roofing system for over a year. During this time I was trained by the Uniflex Technical Representative to thoroughly understand their surface preparation techniques and application. Let me be clear, I am not a fan of roof coatings so I was apprehensive when I first applied Uniflex. Right from the container I knew this was not a roof coating but rather a fluid applied roofing system just as they promised. And, to my surprise, the Uniflex claim came true. It did cure equivalent to a TPO membrane.

Without the Uniflex Technical Reps knowledge during this period, I put Uniflex through torture. I felt in order to trust this product I had to know what would make it fail. I installed the product in areas that were not cleaned properly. I installed the product in areas of standing water for extended periods. I installed the product on roofing penetrations that had high temperature fluctuations and vibrations. I installed the product on vertical block parapet walls, and I even installed the product on the flat roof side of mansard shingle roofed facades right over the shingles.

Under these experiments, my very first appropriate application of Uniflex was to an aged asphalt roof that provided several good leaks per year; all, of course, over an occupied (and frustrated) tenant space. In order to control my research, I applied the Uniflex roofing system with my own resources not only to the aged asphalt roof but also to the interior of the buildings' deteriorating gutters. That was over three years ago and still no tenant complaint about the roof leaking. Actually, since the application of Uniflex was a white color, the tenant had commented that their electric bill has significantly been reduced and the building owner has not needed to replace the gutters.

With my experience in hand, I went to industry professionals of architects, roofing manufacturers, roofing installers, roofing suppliers and roofing consultants to learn their thoughts on Uniflex. After all, if I was going to suggest this as the recommended solution to chronic roofing issues to my clients, I wanted to be positive about my decision and make sure I wasn't missing anything. I was surprised at how little was known about Uniflex. Some just shrugged it off as just another coating and some saw Uniflex as a needed alternative, middle ground, roofing system that could bridge the gap between roof coatings and re-roofings. One such individual that saw

iNNOVATE Group Inc.

333 West Bethalto Dr., #211

Bethalto, IL 62010

www.InnovateGroupInc.com

Innovate...to do something in a new way...to effect a change in...to have new ideas about how something can be done.

AN ALTERNATIVE ROOFING SOLUTION THE UNIFLEX FLUID APPLIED ROOFING SYSTEM



the same potential in Uniflex was George Holbrook of Blakely Sheet Metal Company. George came by my office one day looking to discuss roofing opportunities with me. What he and I thought would be a thirty minute conversation ended up being three hours. Intrigued also, George and Blakely Sheet Metal decided to put Uniflex to their own tests to see if it was the product it claimed to be. Impressed with the results, Blakely became a certified installer of the Uniflex Roofing System.

Suffice it to say, I was also impressed and convinced that Uniflex could fill the gap between inferior roof coatings and high priced re-roofs or overlays. With that, I went on to develop Preventative Roof Maintenance Plans for building owners. For owners with large roofs, the plans took into account the application flexibility of Uniflex to spread out the cost to owners and tenants. The Preventative Roofing Maintenance Plan utilizes Uniflex in stages. For example, if the roof area is 1500 squares, Uniflex can break the roof into 3 to 5 warrantable sections allowing the owner to spread the expense over 3 to 5 years while still gaining a new roofing system as the end result. Once completed, Uniflex can be re-applied to the entire surface periodically thereby maintaining the new roof condition ad infinitum.

Uniflex can also be used to stop leaks in the untreated areas just like the traditional '3-Course' method for repairing asphalt roof leaks or with a scrim to repair membrane roof leaks. And even without the Plan, Uniflex is a perfect replacement for the traditional roof repairs no matter what the substrate. The repairs are fast, cost-effective and once trained, can be performed by in-house maintenance staff.

This brings me to the one of the best parts of the Uniflex Roofing Systems for building owners. Uniflex can be applied typically in the cost range of \$2.50 to \$3.00 per square foot while achieving a 10 year warranty. Each subsequent addition of Uniflex can be applied at a cost far less than the initial application while extending the roof lifecycle and warranty beyond the initial 10 years. For a twenty year cost comparison on a 100,000 square foot roof, the Uniflex roofing system could save up to \$1,125,000 over a re-roof or up to \$800,000 over an overlay, all as a maintenance cost and not a capital expenditure over 29-1/2 years. After 20 years, the savings would become even greater. Only the life expectancy of the building itself defines how long a Uniflex Roofing System will last.

I would highly recommend that if you are looking at an aging, sound roof in poor to fair condition, consider the Uniflex roofing system as an alternative to a re-roof or overlay. It saves costs and landfill space. If skeptical, test it out, just as I did. I would be interested in the results you achieve.

- **Bruce Edwards, President**

DON'T WAIT...  **NOVATE!**

iNOVATE Group Inc.

333 West Bethalto Dr., #211

Bethalto, IL 62010

www.InnovateGroupInc.com

Innovate...to do something in a new way...to effect a change in...to have new ideas about how something can be done.