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The 10 Most Common Roof Problems - Part 1

Whether apparent or unforeseen, roof problems are often a pain and usually can be expensive. The “failure curve” is pretty flat in terms of deterioration during the first few years, and becomes steep during the last few years of its useful life. Unfortunately, problems are inevitable as the roof ages. Without routine maintenance, these minor problems can even become catastrophic.

1. Roof Leaks and Moisture - Leaks can occur for a number of reasons. A common problem in built up roofs (BUR) is leaks at flashings and penetrations. Although leaks can occur from problems in the field of the roof, curbs, pitch pans, plumbing stacks, drains, and terminations are where 90% of leaks originate. Common single ply leaks usually occur at the seams in the field membrane or flashings.

2. Blow Offs, Tenting, and Bllowing - An inadequate amount of fasteners and improper placement could be cause for a system failure in the event of extreme winds. Roofs installed prior to the code changes are vulnerable to high winds at both the field and flashings. Older single ply details were prone to the membrane tenting at the fasteners and bridging at the flashings.

3. Poor Installation and Unsatisfactory Workmanship - A faulty installation increases the likelihood of problem leaks and reduces the roof's life expectancy. BUR installations can suffer if the area is not cleaned, dried, and primed properly. Torch applied systems can be compromised if the crews do not relax the sheets prior to the installation.

4. Lack of Proper Maintenance - There are many reasons not to neglect your roof, including business disruption and financial. The proper education about your specific roof system is the key. Specific levels of maintenance are required to prevent voiding the warranty. Addressing minor problems before they escalate maximizes roof life as well as minimizes problems and expenses.

5. Ponding Water - Ponding water is defined by the NRCA as water that is still standing 48 hours after the last rainfall. Ponding water can adversely effect the performance of asphalt based systems and could void warranties. Proper slope is the key to preventing ponding water. Slope can be designed in the structure or introduced with a tapered insulation system. Other factors contributing to ponding water are lack of PVC drain lines at HVAC units, and clogged drains.