



INSTALLING EPDM ROOFING on Flat Roofs

Until the early 1990's, using a professional roofer was the only way to get a rubberized roof system installed. What was once a product used only on shopping centers or department stores is now being used for smaller residential jobs. Most do-selfers will find cold process modified bitumen roofing a more practical material for use on flat porch roofs, flat garage roofs, and any other location with too shallow a slope to apply shingles. However, single-ply rubberized roofing is another option in these locations. Since in many applications it has no seams and is usually installed without nailing, it may be a solution for leak-prone areas where other materials have not been successful in deterring water intrusion.

One of the disadvantages of this material is that it is currently available only in the large sheets used in commercial applications. As homeowners start to buy rubberized roofing, manufactures may begin to market it in more suitable sizes and quantities for residential use. Right now, though, your best choice is to buy jointly with one or two others and split the materials yourself, because the minimum size that you'll need to buy is often far more than you'll need for your own house. You'll find rubberized roofing products carried by many roofing suppliers; check the phone book.

There are several different manufacturers of rubberized roofing, and each one offers several different ways to install their product. Those differences in application mean that one method may be a better choice over another for a particular job. You'll want to get installation instructions for the product you choose from the roofing supplier—and, asking their advice for your individual application is a good idea.

This handout will describe installation of one particular brand of rubberized roofing, EPDM, using one particular method. EPDM roofing requires a flat, relatively smooth surface as a base. If you have an existing asphalt roof of some type (such as traditional roll roofing), you'll need to carefully and completely remove it. EPDM and asphalt-based products are not compatible—the asphalt will eat through the EPDM—so they can't come into contact with one another. If, after stripping the roof, there is residual tar left on the deck, you can cover the deck with a high-density fiber recover board (generally available where you bought your EPDM.)

With the deck prepared, unroll the roofing material and cut on the ground a piece that is two to four feet longer on each side than the actual roof. (The excess will be trimmed off later.) A pair of large scissors works well for cutting the roofing, and you can use a chalk line to mark where to cut.

Put your gluing supplies and the roofing on the roof. You'll also need a long handle and a roller with a good-quality roller cover for applying the glue. Position the roofing and make sure it is located where you want it. Then, fold half the roofing back over the other half. (You can fold it lengthwise or widthwise, whichever works best for your roof.) Then, spread the glue around on the roof deck and on the roofing portion that is folded over. The glue needs to dry

(continued)

before you mate the roof and the deck. Depending on the weather, the drying process takes from five to twenty minutes. When it's ready, you slowly and evenly unroll the roofing and press it against the roof deck. It helps to have several people working together at this point—because once the roofing touches the deck, it's stuck. There's virtually no way to move it or slide it around. Also, if two parts of the roofing happen to come in contact with each other, they will stick together where they touch.

When the first side has been glued down, fold back the remainder of the roofing, and repeat the gluing process.

If you have to cover an area that will require using two pieces of roofing, you'll need to allow for extra roofing to overlap one of the pieces at the seam (normally four to six inches.) The piece closer to the bottom of the roof always goes on first, with the top piece overlapping it. You'll also need to use a special cement at the seam to glue the overlapped portion to the piece below it.

Flashing around the edges of a rubberized roof requires special details described in the manufacturer's literature. Finish off the outer edges and the top of the flashing pieces with metal termination bars, trimming off any excess roofing material. These areas, along with seams or other areas that need it, should be sealed with the caulk specified by the roofing manufacturer.

Rubberized roofing systems, when installed properly, promise less maintenance and longer life than traditional roofing choices. When they are installed with glue, if you should develop a leak, the water doesn't travel under the roofing. Moreover, if you ever need to patch rubberized roofing, it's like repairing a bike tire—something most of us have done.

Rubberized roofs have been used commercially for decades. Now, as more and more people begin to see their advantages, they are starting to come home.