



COATINGS TECH NOTE 9

Essential Role of Reinforcement Fabrics in Cold Liquid-Applied Roofing Systems

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Industry veterans are keenly aware of an emerging risk within the liquid-applied roofing sector. As of 2025, there is a growing tendency among some practitioners to "simplify" these roofing systems by omitting a key component, the fabric reinforcement. RCMA considers this practice highly inadvisable because without this layer, the integrity of the system is compromised from the outset. While omitting the reinforcement may expedite installation, doing so significantly increases the risks of premature membrane failure, water infiltration and, ultimately, early system breakdown, potentially leading to dissatisfied clients and costly repairs.

Roof Coatings vs. Liquid-Applied Roof Systems

A roof coating serves as a protective and maintenance-oriented layer applied over an existing roofing system, whereas a liquid-applied roof system functions as a fully bonded, seamless waterproofing membrane. Both solutions utilize similar chemical compositions and technologies. The primary distinction is that roof coatings are intended to extend the service life by protecting the current roof structure, while liquid-applied roof systems act as the main waterproofing barrier, forming a membrane upon curing.

Fabric Is Not Optional, It's the Backbone

Liquid-applied roofing is recognized for its flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and durability, but these advantages are contingent upon the reinforcement layer. Without this layer, the integrity of the system is compromised from the outset. The fabric reinforcement serves as the necessary support for liquid-applied roofing systems. This fabric does more than simply lie within the coating; it transforms liquid-applied materials into robust membranes that can withstand UV exposure, standing water, and wide shifts in temperature.

Designed to be both strong and flexible, the reinforcement adapts with the roof's movements instead of resisting them. In practice, that means the system has increased crack bridging capabilities, and increased puncture and tear resistance which allows it to remain intact, even when temperatures fluctuate dramatically in a single day. Without reinforcement, the system loses its resilience against the common stressors that roofs encounter.



The Value of Fabric Reinforcement

The following bullet points highlight just some of values of fabric reinforcement.

- Increased performance of restorations over aged roofs that are already stressed and weakened.
- Split and crack repairs, that demand both elongation and tear resistance.
- Sealing flashings, penetrations, and terminations where leaks commonly originate.
- Seam reinforcement that greatly increases a seam's ability to hold up year after year.

Relying on a liquid-applied system to consistently address those conditions without reinforcement can easily lead to increased callbacks, potential warranty issues, and reputational risk.

The Cost of “Saving”

There are claims that a liquid-applied system without reinforcement can be faster, more cost-effective, or sufficient for the intended purpose. However, retrofitting with a properly reinforced liquid-applied system can still reduce costs by up to 70% when compared to a complete roof replacement, saving the owner money and providing them with a much more durable system. Omitting the reinforcement does not result in genuine savings but rather introduces significant risk to both the client's property and the contractor's professional reputation.

Summary

Roofing involves more than just applying materials; it serves to safeguard property, businesses, and people. When essential components are removed from roofing systems, the integrity of the entire industry can be compromised, so it is important not to prioritize speed or cost over foundational best practices. Fabric reinforcement, designed for strength and reliability, should not be considered merely an accessory. It is a key factor that enables liquid-applied roofing systems to provide durable performance over many years rather than only a short period. There is no substitute for doing it right the first time!

Remember, in the roofing industry like everywhere else, taking shortcuts may not only lead to financial losses but may also damage professional reputations. Prior to commencing your next project, consider whether you are installing a roof system that meets the highest standards you would expect for your own business, or if you are compromising quality in ways that can lead to future issues. Consult with the manufacturer, follow their instructions, and install a roof system that is robust, renewable, and able to provide many years of reliable service.

Please note this document is based on the original note from Tietex International Ltd. and was revised/modified by the RCMA Technical Advisory Committee.

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