

Understanding Elastomeric Roof Coatings and Their Role in Commercial Roofing Systems

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The term elastomeric frequently appears in discussions involving commercial roofing materials, protective coatings, and roof maintenance. Although commonly associated with flexible roof coatings, the term describes a broader material characteristic involving the ability to stretch or deform under stress and return substantially toward an original shape when that stress is removed.



Jaymar Construction LLC, a construction company based in Slidell, Louisiana, is examining the meaning of elastomeric materials in commercial roofing applications, including how flexibility, surface preparation, coating thickness, and environmental exposure influence performance.

“

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Jules Albert III

Commercial roofing systems experience changing temperatures, moisture exposure, ultraviolet radiation, and structural movement throughout their service lives. Protective coatings may be used in certain roofing assemblies to address weather exposure, surface deterioration, and maintenance requirements.

Understanding the properties of elastomeric materials can help clarify their intended functions and limitations.

What Does Elastomeric Mean?

The word elastomeric refers to materials exhibiting elastic behavior, particularly the ability to undergo deformation and recover after the applied force is removed.

In roofing applications, elastomeric coatings are commonly formulated using acrylic, silicone, polyurethane, or other polymer-based materials.

However, coating chemistry and performance characteristics vary significantly among products.

Elastomeric materials are generally designed to accommodate a degree of movement associated with temperature changes, substrate expansion, and contraction.



According to [Jules Albert III](#), owner of Jaymar Construction LLC in Slidell, understanding the terminology is important when evaluating roofing materials.

"Elastomeric describes how a material behaves when movement or stress occurs," Albert said. "In commercial roofing, flexibility can be important because roofing surfaces expand and contract as temperatures change. However, the term alone does not establish whether a particular coating is appropriate for every roof or environmental condition."

Flexibility and Thermal Movement

Commercial roofs experience temperature fluctuations throughout the day and across seasonal cycles.

Solar exposure can increase surface temperatures, while nighttime cooling causes roofing materials to contract.

These repeated changes create movement within roofing assemblies.

Different roofing components may expand and contract at different rates, particularly where metal flashing, membrane materials, and structural components meet.

Elastomeric coatings are formulated to tolerate certain levels of movement without immediately cracking or losing continuity.

However, the amount of movement a coating can accommodate depends on its formulation, application thickness, adhesion, and environmental conditions.

Flexibility does not eliminate the need for properly designed expansion joints, flashing details, or

structural movement accommodations.

Common Elastomeric Coating Materials

Several coating chemistries are used in commercial roofing applications.

Acrylic elastomeric coatings are typically water-based and may provide reflective properties when formulated with light-colored pigments.

Silicone coatings are commonly used in applications requiring resistance to prolonged moisture exposure, although product suitability depends on specific conditions and manufacturer requirements.

Polyurethane coatings may provide different mechanical characteristics, including resistance to certain forms of abrasion and physical wear.

Each material category includes products with varying specifications, limitations, and installation requirements.

Product selection should account for existing roof materials, drainage conditions, environmental exposure, and compatibility with previously applied coatings.

Surface Preparation and Adhesion

Coating performance depends heavily on the condition of the underlying roof surface.

Dirt, moisture, loose materials, biological growth, and deteriorated roofing components can interfere with proper adhesion.

Before applying a coating, roof surfaces may require cleaning, drying, repairs, or priming.

Existing seams, penetrations, flashing details, and areas of deterioration should also be evaluated.

Applying a coating over damaged or unsuitable roofing materials does not necessarily correct underlying problems.

Albert emphasized that coating application begins with evaluating the existing roof.

"Surface preparation is an important part of coating performance," Albert said. "Even a material designed to remain flexible can experience adhesion problems when applied over moisture, contamination, or deteriorated roofing components. Existing roof conditions must be considered before determining whether a coating application is appropriate."

Coating Thickness and Application Requirements

Elastomeric coatings are generally applied according to manufacturer specifications involving coverage rates and dry-film thickness.

Dry-film thickness refers to the thickness of the coating after curing or drying.

Insufficient application thickness may affect durability, weather resistance, and the ability to accommodate limited substrate movement.

Excessive application thickness can also create problems, depending on the coating chemistry and curing conditions.

Some roofing applications require multiple coats, reinforcement materials, or additional treatment around seams and penetrations.

Application temperatures, humidity, substrate moisture, and weather forecasts may influence installation procedures.

Reflectivity and Roof Surface Temperatures

Certain elastomeric coatings are formulated to reflect solar radiation.

Reflective roof coatings can reduce solar heat absorption under appropriate conditions, potentially lowering roof surface temperatures.

However, reflectivity depends on coating color, formulation, cleanliness, aging, and environmental exposure.

The effect on building energy consumption varies according to insulation levels, climate, HVAC operation, and roof assembly characteristics.

Not every elastomeric coating is highly reflective, and flexibility should not be confused with solar reflectance.

These properties represent separate performance characteristics that require individual evaluation.

Limitations of Elastomeric Roof Coatings

Elastomeric coatings are not universally appropriate for all commercial roofing systems.

Existing moisture intrusion, saturated insulation, structural deterioration, inadequate drainage, and incompatible roofing materials may require corrective work beyond coating application.

Standing water can also affect coating selection because some products have limitations involving prolonged ponding conditions.

A coating does not replace necessary structural repairs or automatically restore a roof assembly with substantial underlying damage.

"Coatings should be evaluated as components of a roofing system rather than universal solutions," Albert said. "Material compatibility, drainage, existing roof condition, and manufacturer requirements determine whether a coating can perform as intended."

South Louisiana Environmental Considerations

Commercial roofs in South Louisiana experience prolonged heat, elevated humidity, heavy rainfall, and occasional tropical weather.

These conditions can influence coating selection, application scheduling, and long-term maintenance requirements.

Ultraviolet exposure, moisture accumulation, and repeated temperature changes contribute to the environmental stresses affecting roofing materials.

Regular inspections can help identify coating deterioration, seam movement, drainage restrictions, and other conditions requiring attention.

Understanding Material Performance

The term elastomeric identifies an important physical characteristic but does not describe every aspect of roofing material performance.

Flexibility, adhesion, weather resistance, coating thickness, and compatibility must be evaluated together.

Understanding these distinctions can help property owners and facility managers interpret roofing specifications, maintenance recommendations, and material requirements.

About Jaymar Construction LLC

Jaymar Construction LLC is a construction company based in Slidell, Louisiana, providing residential and commercial construction and roofing-related services. The company addresses roofing materials, building maintenance considerations, and construction requirements

associated with properties throughout South Louisiana.

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