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SPRI responds to MRCA Advisory on TPO

Waltham, MA, April 2010 — SPRI, the association representing sheet membrane and component suppliers to the commercial roofing industry, has formally responded to a recent Midwest Roofing Contractors Association (MRCA) Technical and Research (T & R) Committee advisory on TPO roofing systems.

The advisory recommends that MRCA members take special precautions to limit TPO accelerated weathering due to excessive solar or thermal loading.

In a letter to Tom Drake, executive director of MRCA, SPRI Technical Director Mike Ennis said SPRI agrees that special care must be taken in areas of a roof that may be subjected to temperatures beyond the in-service limits recommended by the materials' manufacturers. However, Ennis added that MRCA did not include data to support its conclusions, and the advisory unfairly singles out TPO membranes.

“The T & R Committee’s advisory references a few instances of ‘problems’ that are limited in occurrence and severity, and are not truly representative of current production and TPO membranes’ proven success,” said Ennis. “Accordingly, SPRI regards the advisory--insofar as it singles out these membranes--to be irresponsible, and thus regrettably fails to advance the roofing industry and the well being of all.”

The MRCA advisory stated that “heat emitting equipment and heat exhausting vents or dark emissive material laid on the roof (that) can elevate the temperature of the covered sheet.”

“These are considerations for all membrane types,” Ennis said, “not just TPO, and taking them into account is always good roofing practice. SPRI takes no issue with MRCA’s recommendation to its members, and in their consulting with manufacturers regarding this subject. That is, they should review plans carefully where high heat and/or high UV loading likely exists.”

The MRCA advisory recommends members review roof plans for situations where sunlight is reflected back on the roofing membrane; such as areas below metal and glass or highly reflective curtain walls, or high profile reflective wall flashings.

If situations exist that may commonly elevate temperatures over 160 F or increase solar loads beyond “normal” incoming solar load, the MRCA advisory recommends the following: Question the manufacturer as to the suitability of its product for the situation; consider changing the product to a material that will clearly withstand the loading; consider changes in design to forestall the loading.

In its letter to Drake, SPRI reminded MRCA and its members that in the past five years there have been more than 3 billion square feet of TPO sold in North America, nearly the entirety of which has performed satisfactorily. And Ennis asked MRCA to carefully assess SPRI’s opinion on the advisory and to take the appropriate action to “set the record straight” going forward.

For more information on this issue, e-mail SPRI’s headquarters at info@spri.org or call 781-647-7026.

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