SPECIAL SECTION

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METAL ROOFING MAGAZINE

ANNIVERSARY 25 YEARS 2001-2026

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Opportunities in store for 2027

I can't believe it's already December. It's hard to believe METALCON was two months ago. It was at that time that the Metal of Honor ballot was finalized and I began encouraging the exhibitors to visit the online ballot and vote.

Congratulations to all the companies that appear on the ballot. I'll take this opportunity to encourage you to review the ballot (you can find it on page 43 or online at https://form.jotform.com/232403893070048) and cast your vote for the suppliers and service providers that help make your company more successful.

The turning of another calendar page also means we're that much closer to producing the 2027 ***Metal Roofing IDEA Book.*** As you know, that special issue is filled from cover to cover with recently completed metal roofing projects. It's an all-inclusive edition, meaning that any professional in the metal roofing industry can contribute a project to be considered; roofers, suppliers, manufacturers—anyone can send a project.

In a nutshell, the IDEA Book highlights the beauty, functionality, durability, and versatility of metal roofing across residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial applications. This catalog of case studies demonstrates metal as a real-world roofing solution. Your company can be a part of it and it won't cost you a dime!

The key to having a project published is providing complete details, including materials used, a brief story behind the project (i.e. what did the customer need and how were those needs met), and a few clear, high-resolution photos.

We make it as easy as possible for you to be included. You can use our online portal that prompts for the information we need (https://readmetalroofing.com/metal-roofing-project-submission-form/). Or you can reach out to me via email or phone and I'll walk you through it. Either way, there's no cost involved; it's a free editorial placement that shows how your company is an active participant in the betterment and growth of the metal roofing industry.

I hope to hear from you soon!

Karen Knapstein, Managing Editor
karen@shieldwallmedia.com



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Snow retention system by AceClamp on a residential metal roof.
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Built To Last

Getting the Most Out Of Your Gutter Machine

FALL 2006 FLASHBACK



This article was originally published in the Fall 2006 edition of Gutter Opportunities, a special section in *Metal Roofing Magazine*. Although it was published 20 years ago, it has timeless takeaways.

Expecting your gutter machine to last for years means taking care of it.

This article looks back at advice from gutter machine manufacturers on transporting, cleaning, lubricating, adjusting, and everyday habits that can help keep equipment running smoothly.

Even though the article is two decades old, the basics still offer a useful reminder: A bit of regular maintenance can go a long way toward preventing costly repairs and keeping a machine operational. Take a look to see if there are maintenance tips you can put to work today.

But please remember: You should ALWAYS check with the machine manufacturer for current maintenance recommendations.

By Mark Ward Sr.

Question: When is the best time to buy a new gutter machine? **Answer:** When your business has grown enough to justify the purchase, and not because you've wrecked your old machine.

Gutter machines can last 20, 25, even 30 years. Some manufacturers report they still have occasional customers who are using machines originally purchased in the 1960s. But that kind of longevity doesn't just happen without good maintenance. Requirements for upkeep will vary according to each manufacturer's machine, but the key is regular maintenance and common-sense operation.

The gutter machine business is extremely price-sensitive, say manufacturers, so adding bells and whistles that increase machine prices would scare installers away. Machines are therefore made from basic technology and designed for durability. At Pacific Rollformer of Eugene, Ore., vice president Mitch Nelson concurs his company's products are built for "virtually no maintenance" but a few simple practices can extend the life of machines.

"You need to oil the chain and clean out the box twice a year, and lubricate the guillotine every day," Nelson advises, "and if you're not planning to use your gutter machine for 30 days or more, then you should at least run it for 10 or 15 minutes once a week to prevent the





Jim Schmidt of Grover Machine in St. Louis lubricates the chain regularly to minimize wear on the chain and sprockets. Schmidt also lubricates the shear blade (inset) to cut down on friction and make the unit work easier. Photos courtesy of Grover Machine

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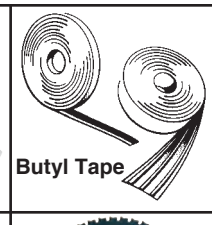



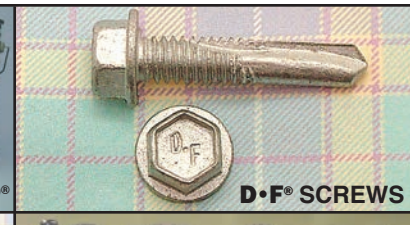



















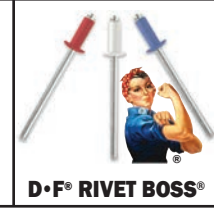





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bearings and contacts from rusting."

Nelson recommends gutter installers go to a bearing supplier and purchase chain lube oil. By contrast, he warns, "WD40 has a tendency to wash your lubricants away. It's such a light oil that, after you've cleaned things up, it just goes away. Also, since WD40 is applied in a spray, it can get on your rollers and create slippage when you run some gutter coil." However, WD40 is a good oil to spray each day on the guillotine that cuts the coil.

As for adjusting the machine, Nelson says Pacific Rollformer does not recommend a set schedule for recalibration "but you can give us a call and 95 percent of the time when nothing is broken, we can just talk you through it over the phone." He counsels gutter installers to "learn how your machine normally sounds and listen for anything that doesn't sound right," in the same way that car owners listen for "noises" in the vehicles.

Pacific Rollformer makes a flatbed trailer designed for its gutter machines, which are between 16 and 20 feet in length. Nelson recommends machines be transported with gutter coil loaded into the unit. Then at the jobsite, he urges installers "to keep the lid of the machine closed, so you don't let stuff like strips of metal, screws, and roofing material down into your machine." And because gutter coils are very heavy, crews should be trained in how to properly handle the material and then feed it into the machine.

"Gutter machines can last for 25 years," Nelson reports, "but we've also seen machines that haven't been properly maintained and have to be replaced after 10 years. It's just like your car. How long it lasts depends on how you take care of it."

Clean and Dry

When asked to list the most important maintenance requirements for a gutter machine, service manager Fritz Batz of Knudson Manufacturing in Broomfield, Colo., replies, "Keep your machines clean and dry and out of the weather. And keep them adjusted because, if the machine is adjusted correctly and locked down, then the only variable is the coil you run through it."

Batz strongly advises gutter installers to "keep your hands out of the machine and avoid the temptation of always trying to make fine adjustments every time you run some coil." Instead of relying on the do-it-yourself approach, Knudson offers local distributors who are trained to adjust the company's gutter machines. They know, for example, "coil



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has changed over the years so aluminum now has a lot of recycled content, and how that affects the adjustment of the gutter machine," he explains.

In preparing to visit a jobsite, Batz recommends Knudson machines first be loaded and transported with coil already in the unit. "That helps keep your machine adjusted properly," he states, "because when you're driving down the road and everything is being bumped and vibrated, having coil loaded in the machine will keep the rollers from slapping against each other."

Knudson has been in business since 1965, a time when the seamless gutter business was new and machines were designed for installers who wanted equipment that could fit in the back of a pickup truck. "But today," Batz relates, "the most successful gutter companies transport their gutter machines in an enclosed trailer, truck, or van. Even though the rollers are made of stainless steel and other parts are powder-coated, you still want to keep the weather out of your machines as much as possible."

Though a trucker needs to go through an inspection checklist every time he prepares for a long haul, Batz says gutter installers have no comparable need to check their machines when they arrive each day at a jobsite. "You can run 300 feet of coil in eight-and-a-half minutes," he points out. "So the machine isn't going all day long, like the installers themselves do." Because gutter machines may run for only a few minutes a day, he believes the most important inspection regimen is to "just keep checking if the chain is clean and if the gearbox is leaking or not."

According to Batz, the most important jobsite precaution for keeping gutter machines in good repair "is to keep the lid on, so you keep out debris which can end up damaging your coil when you run it through the rollers." He also recommends against operating machines in inclement weather, since the units have electric motors and exposure to water is a safety hazard.

"There's nothing in our gutter machines that's designed to wear," Batz notes. "Of course, chains can break and electric motors can burn out. You can replace them and keep going, and you can still get parts even for our older machines. But from a mechanical standpoint, your gutter machine can last you 30 years."

Don't Blow It on Buildup

The best way to clean a gutter machine, suggests general manager Rick McVey of St. Louis-based Grover Machine Company, is to "blow it out with an air hose and an air tank, while making sure you don't get any dust on the moving parts and the motor."

The cleaning process only takes an hour and should be done at least twice a year, though McVey believes that a monthly cleaning is optimal. "If you don't clean your machine," he adds, "then you'll get a buildup that will cause extra wear on your moving parts."

A monthly, quarterly, or semiannual cleaning is also a good time to lightly lubricate the chain. McVey agrees that WD40 is the wrong choice for the job and instead recommends motorcycle chain oil. The same oil, or "anything that's silicone-based," also suffices for the light lubrication needed each day for the guillotine, he says. Rollers can be cleaned with a soft cloth or steel wool, using a lacquer thinner that will evaporate and prevent build-up. Finally, he cautions, "Be sure the machine is turned off when you clean it."

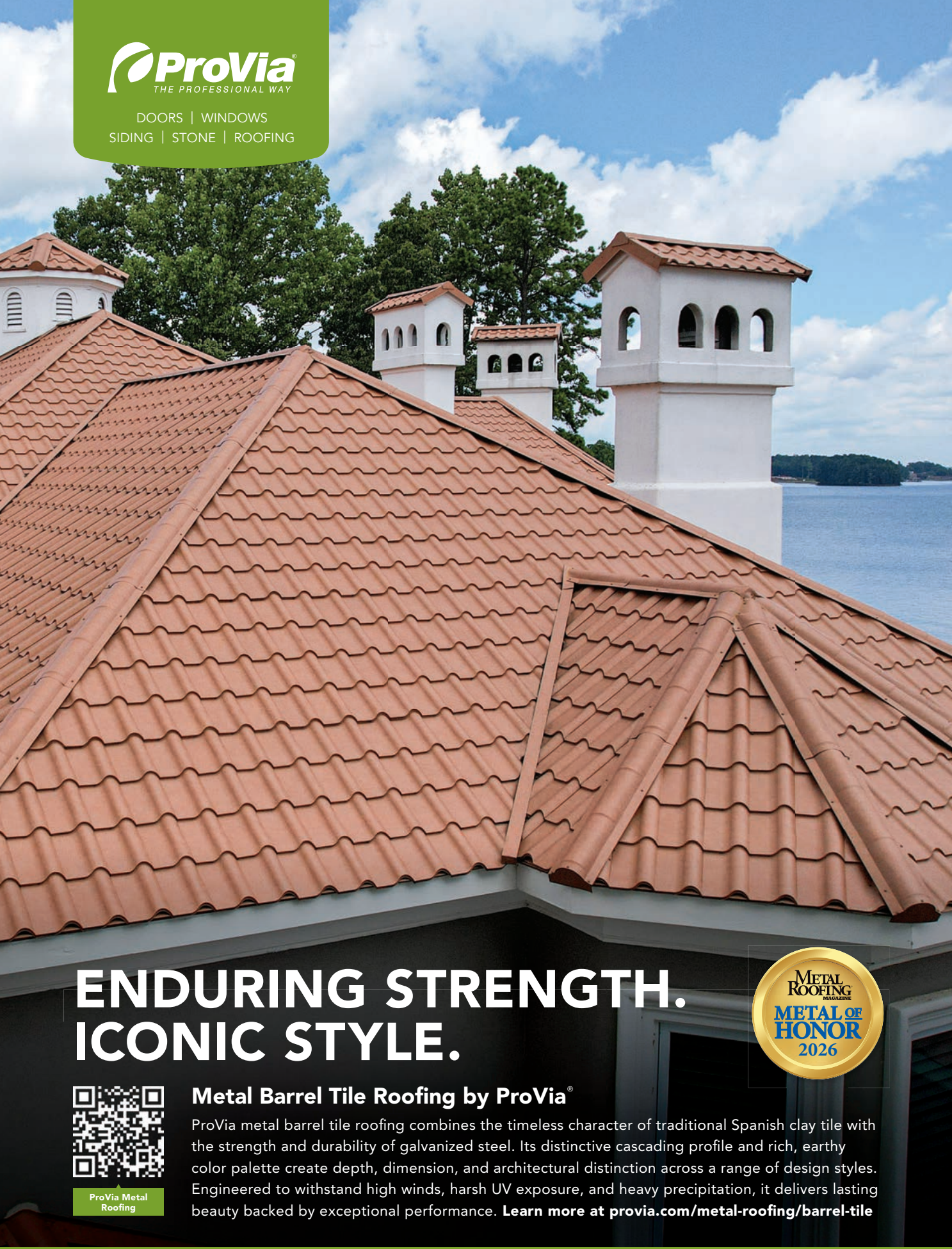
McVey concurs the use of recycled aluminum has an impact on keeping gutter machines properly adjusted, "but at the same, the manufacturers know this and are making machines that do a better job of staying in adjustment." Though machine distributors can perform adjustments, he suggests gutter company owners learn how to correctly do adjustments "so that you're not feeling like you have to try and tweak the machine every day."

But if daily adjustments are not needed, other maintenance items do require daily attention. McVey recommends installers check their machines' electric parts every day to ensure good connections and eliminate any safety hazard, and to make sure the machine lid stays closed to prevent pop rivets or bits of metal from entering the equipment. "Keeping the weather off your machine also prolongs its life," he says, "though most installers don't work in the rain because it's hard to hang gutters when there's rain coming off the house."

Grover products, continues McVey, need not be transported with coil loaded into the unit since the machines' rollers are spring-loaded and do not slap against each other. Yet McVey is very concerned about a common mistake many installers make when transporting their gutter machines.

"At the end of the job, installers often throw the homeowner's old gutters into the back of the truck," he explains, "and that means old leaves, debris, and roof granules are also being thrown in. When that stuff gets into the air, it can migrate into the open ends of your gutter machine."

Preventing such occurrences, and performing regular cleaning and maintenance, leads to a long life for a gutter machine. "We've got models from the 1960s," McVey notes, "which are still in service!"



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Different Strokes

Ron Schell, sales and service manager for Denver-based New Tech Machinery, explains the notion that different manufacturers' machines may have different maintenance requirements. "There are some huge differences," he points out. "For example, other manufacturers recommend that you transport their equipment with coil already loaded in the machine. The top and bottom rollers are made of hard steel and they're positioned against each other so that the rollers can both drive and form the gutter coil."

As such, rollers can hit against each if the machine is transported empty. By contrast, New Tech machines are designed with separate rollers for driving and then forming gutter coil. Since the machine can be transported empty, Schell notes, that means no coil is wasted.

Nevertheless, other maintenance concerns are common to all machines. "The biggest killer of gutter machines," relates Schell, "is when something gets inside the machine. I've actually seen a tin-snip, as well as a calculator, dropped into a machine." In his experience, the most common — and most costly — mistake installers can make. Crews leave the lid open and then "somebody's not paying attention so something gets dropped into the unit while it's running," he observes. "Yet even a little zip-screw can do heavy damage to the rollers."

Schell also has seen crews throw torn-off gutters into the back of the truck, where old debris can then enter the front of the gutter machine where coil is fed in. "And remember," he warns, "the guy running the machine isn't the owner and so he doesn't care." But such carelessness can cost the machine owner $1,000 to $1,500 in replacement parts and eight hours of labor from a service technician at $60 to $70 per hour. "Depending on the age of your equipment," he points out, "the repairs might cost more than the value of your machine."



While doing machine maintenance, it's important to make sure their are no exposed wires (top) that may be dangerous. With the side covers off (bottom), you can more easily clean chains and rollers, while making sure they are in good condition.

A more careful approach to gutter machine maintenance requires not only proper transportation and operation, but "keeping the chains properly oiled and tensioned, as well as lubing the shear every day," advises Schell. Like other manufacturers, he concurs that "WD40 is one of the worst things you can use on your chain and shear, because it actually takes the grease off your chain and it sticks to your shear blade."



Cleaning the gutter machine yearly is a minimum requirement, though quarterly cleaning is best. Compressed air can be used to pressure-wash the unit, and perhaps a rag to remove heavy buildup that cannot be blown away. Care should be taken, however, not to spray the pressure-wash directly onto any electrical boxes. During the cleaning, the machine should always be unplugged.

Schell recommends installers transport their machines in enclosed trucks or, if open-bed trailers must be used, to at least purchase a cover designed to protect gutter machines. "Keeping moisture out helps extend the life of your equipment," he says. And if the unit is operated during rain or snow, a ground fault interrupter should be used as a safety precaution.

Another helpful daily habit, Schell continues, is "when you get to the jobsite, let the machine run for about five minutes to warm up the motor." Since New Tech machines can arrive at the jobsite empty and without any coil already loaded into the unit, letting the motor warm up can be done without processing — and wasting — any gutter coil.

Finally, Schell suggests, "It's good to have one person in your company who really knows your machines and knows what it takes to operate and maintain them properly. Because if you do that, you can easily get 15, 20, or more years from your gutter machine." ***MR***

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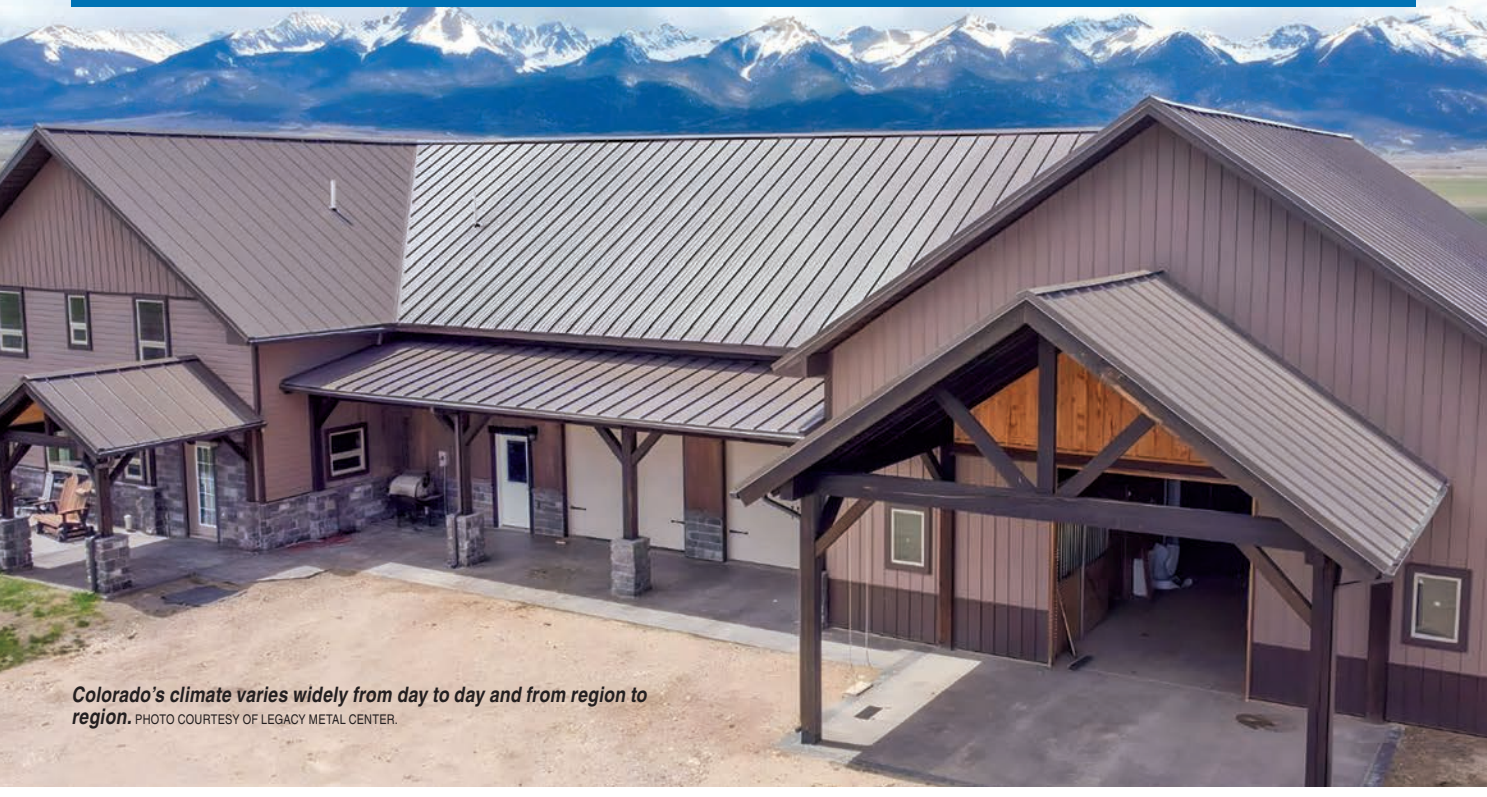

Colorado's climate varies widely from day to day and from region to region. PHOTO COURTESY OF LEGACY METAL CENTER.

Hail, Snow, Wind, and Heat

Choosing the Right Metal Roof Panel by Region

By Jerry Martin, Director of Development, Legacy Metal Center, and Andrew Wilson, Chief Engineering & Innovation Officer, Central States Inc.

The weather your roof faces is changing. Big weather changes across North America mean buildings in every region may be exposed to intense heat, storms, moisture, hail, wind, snow and other environmental stresses.

To an experienced roofer, changing weather is just part of the work. Between navigating installation times and materials, weather is part of the everyday. But for metal roofers and anyone building with metal panels, weather can't be a last-minute radar check. The influence of weather and climate impacts the materials you need before you even sign a contract. And after the roof is installed, its long-term performance is heavily influenced by the conditions it faces.

As a metal panel manufacturer based in Colorado, Legacy Metal Center sees almost every kind of weather. Colorado's climate varies widely from day to day and from region to region. Mountains require snow-load focus, plains emphasize wind, hail is widespread, and UV exposure is high. Whether you're building or roofing, panel specifications should match the location.

But the same principle extends well beyond Colorado.

As a nationwide manufacturer, Central States Manufacturing sees those regional differences play out across an even broader geographic footprint. Andrew Wilson, VP of Engineering for Central States Inc., oversees product development, testing and certifications and engineering, providing a perspective on how metal roofing systems need to respond to environmental demands across the country.

For any metal roofer, choosing roofing panels should be specific and focused on the exact conditions the roof will face in the real world. Climate-specific specifications and tested systems can help reduce leaks, damage and, for the roofer, callbacks.

"Certifications and ratings give us standardized ways to understand how products perform under specific conditions, but they are only part of the equation," Wilson said. "Contractors also have to understand what was tested, how the complete system was assembled and whether the installation in the field follows those requirements."

What to Consider Before Choosing a Panel

Climate should be one of the first considerations in panel selection. Metal roofing contractors should consider hail resistance, wind uplift and snow loads. In some parts of the country, wildfire and salt exposure should also enter the conversation with customers.

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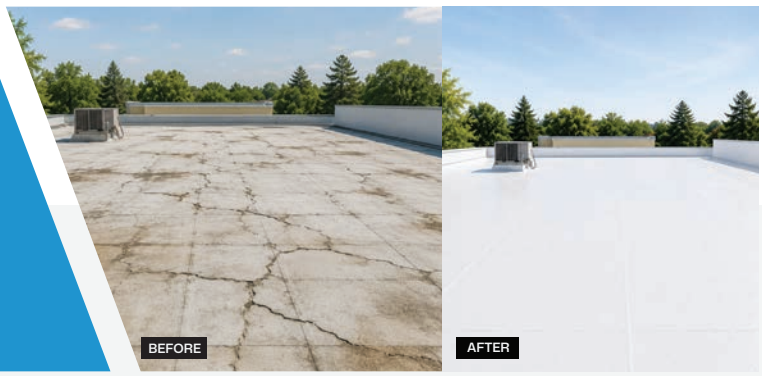

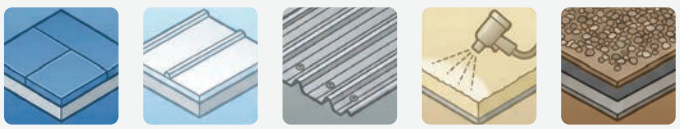

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The best results come from evaluating those factors together because they can influence profile, gauge, coating, substrate, fastening and attachment.

And regional recommendations should be exactly that: a starting point.

A warehouse near the Gulf Coast, an agricultural building in Iowa and a commercial building in Colorado present very different environmental conditions. Even two buildings in the same ZIP code can have different requirements because of height, slope, terrain, exposure and building design.

"Rather than asking which panel is best for a particular state or region, start with the conditions that specific building is going to experience," Wilson said. "Then look at the tested performance of the entire roofing assembly and make sure the system is being installed the way it was designed and tested."

In Hail Zones

If you're living, building or roofing in the Midwest, along the Great Plains or in the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, hail is likely a regular concern.

While cosmetic denting can occur, what's most important is maintaining a weather-tight seal. When it hails, you want your metal roofing system to have impact resistance and durability. Systems should continue to perform after impact events.

For Legacy Metal Center, Tuff Rib and PBR panels are UL Class 4 impact-rated systems. In general, heavier-gauge and stronger profiles can help, but tested systems provide a much clearer understanding of performance.

That becomes important when understanding what a rating actually represents. UL 2218, for example, evaluates a roof-covering material's resistance to impact, with Class 4 representing the highest classification within that test. Wilson has also emphasized that achieving a Class 4 rating does not mean a roof is immune to cosmetic damage from every hail event.

"A rating gives contractors valuable information, but we also have to understand its limits," Wilson said. "A Class 4 impact rating does not mean a roof can never be dented by hail. It tells us how that product performed under a defined test method. That distinction matters when we're talking with contractors and building owners about real-world performance. The thickness of the steel is an important aspect of the conversation – the resistance to dents increases exponentially with thickness. The actual thickness matters more than it's reported gauge."



Choosing roofing panels should be specific and focused on the exact conditions the roof will face in the real world. *COURTESY OF CENTRAL STATES INC.*

Under Snow Load

Colorado didn't get as heavy a snowfall this year, but most years, some areas of the state can expect significant snowfall.

That is a big load for any structure, but especially for a roof. Snow load affects detailing, too. If you're in an area with the potential for heavy snowfall, understanding panel strength, spans and system capacity is a must. Clips, seams, underlayment and engineered snow-retention systems must also account for freeze-thaw cycles and associated movement.

The same considerations apply beyond Colorado, from other parts of the Mountain West to the Upper Midwest and Northeast.

Snow also demonstrates why regional panel selection cannot stop at the panel itself. Roofing performance begins with the entire assembly, as well as the structure supporting it.

"Snow is a good example of why we need to think in terms of systems," Wilson said. "Panel strength matters, but so do the supporting structure, attachment, detailing and the movement that occurs through repeated temperature changes. You must understand how those pieces work together."

Bracing for Wind

Wind uplift is always something that should be considered at the system level. To brace against wind, panels, clips, fasteners and substrates must work together as a tested assembly.

And wind is hardly just a coastal concern.

Wilson has previously pointed to destructive wind events reaching well into the country's interior, including the inland effects of hurricanes and derechos capable of producing significant wind gusts across landlocked states.

For contractors along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, wind performance may be one of the first considerations. But contractors throughout the Great Plains, Midwest and other storm-prone areas should be asking many of the same questions.

Testing methods such as ASTM E1592 and UL 580 provide methods for evaluating wind-uplift performance.

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But ultimately, the tested assembly and correct installation matter.

"We shouldn't think about wind performance as something that belongs to the panel alone," Wilson said. "The panel, fasteners or clips, substrate and installation all work together. A contractor needs to know how that assembly was tested and make sure the installed roof matches the appropriate tested configuration."

That last point is critical. Strong panels can't compensate for improper attachment. Contractors working in areas with significant wind should focus on tested assemblies, correct fastening and installation that follows the tested configuration. The edge conditions and detection play an enormous role in the longevity of a weathertight roof system.



Choosing the right coating can help panels withstand their environment over the long term. *PHOTO COURTESY OF CENTRAL STATES INC.*

By the Coast

Paint and coating systems aren't just for looks. Choosing the right coating can help panels withstand their environment over the long term.

That becomes especially important in coastal areas where moisture may carry salt and other contaminants.

Coating, substrate, fasteners and accessories should be selected as part of the same system. Distance from the coastline, building location, prevailing weather and the manufacturer's specific requirements can all affect the appropriate specification.

"In coastal applications, material compatibility becomes extremely important," Wilson said. "It's another situation where we can't look at one component in isolation. The substrate, coating, fasteners and accessories all need to be appropriate for the environment and compatible with one another."

In the Heat

Across the Southwest and much of the South, contractors face another challenge: sustained heat and intense UV exposure.

Heat and UV exposure place long-term demands on coatings and finishes. Extreme temperatures can also contribute to thermal expansion and contraction, putting repeated movement into panels, fasteners and seams.

If you're working in an environment where intense heat and UV exposure are common, durable coatings and appropriate reflective finishes can improve longevity. At the same time, the roofing system needs to accommodate the thermal movement that comes with changing temperatures.

"Heat shouldn't only be viewed as a coating issue," Wilson said. "The roof is repeatedly expanding and contracting as temperatures change. The panel system, attachment method and installation details need to be selected with that movement in mind."

In Wildfire-Prone Areas

For contractors in parts of the West and other wildfire-prone areas, fire exposure is another consideration.

Metal is naturally noncombustible, and metal roofing can be incorporated into roof assemblies designed to achieve high levels of fire performance. Wilson has previously noted that metal roofing can be part of Class A fire-rated roof assemblies. Testing standards such as UL 790 and ASTM E108 evaluate roof-covering performance when exposed to fire-related conditions.

As with impact and wind ratings, however, the important distinction is understanding what has been tested and rated. Performance belongs to the appropriate assembly and configuration rather than simply assuming all metal roofs perform identically.

When a Region Has More Than One Challenge

Perhaps the biggest lesson from roofing in Colorado is also one of the most applicable nationwide: a roof rarely faces just one challenge.

Out West, roofs may have to perform under the combined exposure of hail, wind, snow and UV, sometimes within the same week.

In the Great Plains, roofs can experience hail, straight-line winds, heat, freezing temperatures and heavy rain. In the Northeast, the combination might include snow, ice, moisture and significant seasonal temperature swings. Along the Gulf Coast and Southeast, heat, humidity, heavy rainfall and high winds may all be considerations.

"One of the things we have to be careful about is designing around the most obvious hazard and overlooking everything else the building will

experience," Wilson said. "The best approach is to evaluate the complete exposure and then determine which roofing assembly is appropriate for those conditions."

Lessons From Roofing Across the Country

For Legacy Metal Center, roofing in Colorado provides a front-row seat to the challenges created when multiple weather conditions converge. For Central States Manufacturing, supplying metal building products across the country broadens that perspective.

The underlying lesson is the same regardless of geography: start with the conditions the building will actually face.

Then consider the building itself, the roofing assembly, applicable test standards and installation requirements.

Certifications provide an important tool for evaluating performance, but ratings are not substitutes for correct product selection and installation. Wilson's previous work stresses that certifications have specific boundaries and that installation has a direct effect on whether a roofing system performs as intended.

By matching a metal roofing system to the environment and designing for combined stressors, contractors can prioritize durability and resilience while reducing the risk of leaks, damage and callbacks.

Choosing the right metal panel is important.

Choosing the right metal roofing system for the building, climate and application. ***MR***

Jerry Martin *is the Director of Development at Legacy Metal Center, a metal panel manufacturer based in Penrose, Colorado. Driven by the company's commitment to integrity, quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction, Martin and Legacy Metal Center have become trusted experts for premium metal roofing, siding, and trim in Colorado and surrounding states.*

Andrew Wilson *serves as Vice President of Engineering and Innovation at Central States Inc., overseeing product development, testing and certifications, engineering and the Project Management Office. He has served in a variety of leadership roles in the past, including supply chain and operations. He brings decades of experience working in manufacturing businesses, specializing in continuous improvement and quality management.*

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The Future of the Industry

Private Equity and Consolidation in Metal Roofing

By Trent Cotney, Adams & Reese, LLP

Consolidation is changing the construction industry, and metal roofing is not immune. Private equity firms and strategic buyers continue to pursue manufacturers, distributors, and contractors because they see opportunities to build scale, improve purchasing power, and expand geographically. For independent metal roofing businesses, the question is no longer whether consolidation will affect the marketplace. The question is how to respond while protecting profitability and customer relationships.

The impact goes beyond ownership changes. When a distributor acquires competitors, contractors may face different credit terms, product offerings, or pricing structures. When a manufacturer expands into distribution or installation, existing customers may find themselves competing with their own suppliers. And when a national contractor enters a local market, independent companies may face a competitor with greater access to capital, technology, and marketing resources.

These developments do not necessarily favor larger companies. Local contractors often have advantages that are difficult to replicate: experienced crews, longstanding customer relationships, knowledge of regional building requirements, and the ability to make decisions quickly. The key is understanding where consolidation creates exposure and where it creates opportunity.

Supplier relationships deserve immediate attention. Contractors that rely heavily on a single distributor or manufacturer should review their purchasing arrangements and identify alternatives before a disruption occurs. Exclusive purchasing commitments, rebate programs, minimum-volume requirements, and unilateral price-change provisions can become more consequential following an acquisition. Contractors should also consider how a change in ownership might affect delivery schedules, warranty administration, and access to replacement materials.

The key is understanding where consolidation creates exposure and where it creates opportunity.

Contract language matters just as much. Metal roofing projects are especially sensitive to changes in steel and aluminum costs, fabrication lead times, and specialized components. Contractors should consider clearly drafted price-escalation provisions, reasonable material substitution procedures, and extensions of time for supply disruptions beyond their control. These provisions need to match the project and applicable law. A vague promise to negotiate later may offer little protection when material costs rise after a contractor has committed to a fixed price.

Consolidation also creates new questions about competition. Manufacturers and distributors may lawfully participate at multiple levels of the supply chain, but their business practices still require scrutiny. Exclusive dealing arrangements, discriminatory access to products, and exchanges of competitively sensitive information can raise concerns depending on the facts and market conditions. Contractors should avoid discussing future bids, pricing strategies, wages, or customer allocations with competitors, even in informal industry gatherings.

For owners who may eventually sell, preparation should begin well before a buyer makes an offer. Private equity transactions often involve more than an attractive purchase price. Buyers will examine financial statements, customer concentration, pending claims, employment practices, licensing, safety records, and the quality of contracts. They may also propose earnouts, rollover equity, employment commitments, or restrictive covenants that significantly affect the seller after closing. An owner should evaluate the total deal structure, not just the headline valuation.

Independent contractors who do not intend to sell should still operate with that same discipline. Accurate job costing, strong collections, documented safety programs, consistent subcontractor agreements, and a reliable management team make the business more resilient. They also make it easier to compete against larger organizations

Disclaimer: *This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Laws and regulations vary by jurisdiction and may change over time. Readers should consult qualified legal counsel regarding their specific circumstances.*

without simply cutting prices.

Contractors should pay particular attention to workforce retention during these transitions. Acquisitions can alter compensation structures, reporting relationships, and expectations for field personnel. Skilled installers and foremen are hard to replace, particularly on architectural metal projects requiring specialized expertise. Owners should communicate with key employees, evaluate incentive programs carefully, and confirm that employment and confidentiality agreements comply with applicable law. A stable workforce can be a meaningful competitive advantage when customers become concerned about service changes following a merger.

Consolidation can create opportunities for specialized metal roofing contractors ...

There is another side to the equation. Consolidation can create opportunities for specialized metal roofing contractors to become preferred installation partners, enter new geographic markets, or take on work that larger organizations do not perform efficiently. Differentiation through craftsmanship, complex detailing, service, and responsive project management can be more durable than a race to the lowest bid.

The metal roofing industry will continue to evolve as capital flows through manufacturing, distribution, and contracting. Contractors cannot control every acquisition or market shift, but they can control their contracts, supplier diversification, internal operations, and strategic direction. In a consolidating market, protecting independence begins with running a disciplined business. ***MR***

Trent Cotney *is a partner and Construction Team Leader at Adams & Reese LLP. You can reach him at 866.303.5868 or trent.cotney@arlaw.com.*

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Let It Snow

Properly Installed Snow Guards Keep People and Property Safe

By Linda Schmid

Metal roofing has many advantages, but its slippery surface can allow accumulated snow to release suddenly posing dangers to people and property. Snow guards can help if you get the layout right. Placement requires an understanding of roof geometry, panel construction, snow load, and the selected system's capacity.

Snow Guard Placement Starts with the Load

Snow accumulating on a metal roof can remain in place for days, then release all at once and damage gutters, crush equipment, or injure someone below. Understanding how that snow behaves is essential to developing your snow retention layout.

According to Rob Haddock, Founder and CEO of S-5!, snow initially develops a temperature-sensitive bond with the roof surface, and as the snowpack settles, it behaves as a single mass. Gravity compresses the snow most at the roof surface and toward the lower end of the slope, increasing its density and compressive strength. When the bond with the roof releases, that whole mass can slide down at once – and that can mean tons of snow falling over just a few seconds.

"Snow retention works by engaging the base of the snowpack and resisting its downslope force," Haddock explains. "A guard does not have to reach the full depth of the snow to restrain it. Relatively short devices can hold a much deeper snowpack because they engage its compressed lower portion, and it acts as a singular mass."

Installers need to account for the snow feeding the system, the force it creates, and the capacity of the attachments to resist that force.

Assess the Entire Roof

Begin by identifying what sliding snow could strike on its way down. Entrances and pedestrian routes are most important, but gutters, lower roofs, equipment, landscaping, and parking areas also need consideration.

M.J. Wasley, Director of Sales, PMC Industries, Inc./AceClamp, recommends installing retention across the full length of the building. Isolated sections can receive additional loading as surrounding snow moves toward them, potentially overwhelming an installation designed only for the area directly above it.

Jerod Webber, National Sales Manager, Dynamic Fastener, explains that an isolated section holds the snow blanket in a V-shape, collecting load from beyond the area directly above it.



Concentration of fence-type snow guards in the lower 35% of a roof in Stockholm, Sweden. *PHOTO COURTESY OF S-5!*

Depending on snow cohesiveness, roof slope, and panel length, he said that load can increase two to three times what was planned for.

"Quite often a single row from end to end will be less labor and more cost effective than multiple rows in specific locations," Tom Grant, Dynamic Fastener, added.

Roof pitch, slope length, and snow load all influence the force a retention system must resist. A steeper pitch increases the downslope force, while a longer eave-to-ridge distance increases the snow area contributing to that force. Panel width and seam spacing determine the number of available attachment points along a row.

Accurate measurements provide the foundation for the layout, along with the panel profile, material, thickness, and supporting construction. The calculation requires the project's design roof snow load. Wasley cautions that local ground snow load and roof snow load are not interchangeable.

"Engineering must connect design loads, tested capacities, spacing, and the complete load path," said Wasley.

The capacity of the attachment is part of that equation. Haddock emphasizes testing on different panel profiles, materials, and gauges because each can affect performance. Published capacity data must involve the specific roof as well as the snow retention so the layout reflects what those connections can actually hold.

Let Capacity Determine Quantity

One row may be enough to restrain the calculated load,

but a long slope, steep pitch, or heavy snow load can require additional rows and/or attachment points. Grant compares the calculated demand with the attachment's safe working load, which Dynamic Fastener defines as half the failure value for that roof. Force exceeding that capacity requires multiple rows.

Haddock explains that once the force per panel is established, it can be compared with the allowable capacity of the proposed device. For example, a calculated demand of 1,016 pounds per panel would require four individual guards when rated for an allowable load of 270 pounds each. A fence system with an allowable capacity of 1,050 pounds per panel could handle that demand with one row. Those quantities apply to that particular roof and attachment configuration; if you change anything, the quantities may no longer apply.

Tim Martin of Levi's Building Components says that appearance can influence the choice between individual guards and continuous rails, provided the selected system meets the load requirements.

"Individual guards are often chosen for decorative applications on residences or commercial facades," Martin said. "Continuous systems, however, can offer greater capacity with fewer pieces, making them a common choice for commercial projects and areas with high snow loads."



An example of 1 row versus 2 rows. The upper roof has 2 rows due to longer distance from peak to eaves; the lower roof has one row as it has less distance to cover and a snow guard that can hold more weight than those on the upper roof. *PHOTO COURTESY OF LEVI'S BUILDING COMPONENTS*

Establish Setback and Row Spacing

The first row's location depends partly on the construction beneath it. Martin says manufacturers commonly recommend placing it approximately 12 to 18 inches above the eave. Wasley emphasizes checking whether that location falls over a supporting wall or an overhang. She favors placement over the structural wall where the snow's weight can be supported.

Moving the first row farther upslope also leaves more snow below it free to slide. "Consideration is needed to decide if it will be a problem when the snow that accumulates below the

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row releases from the roof all at once. The contractor and homeowner should be comfortable with the decision made," said Grant.

When additional rows are needed, their locations must work with the selected system's design. Martin recommends spacing them evenly upslope.

"Deeper drifts higher on the roof may need restraint before they can slide into the retention below. That way each row does its share of carrying the weight," Martin explained.

Haddock's approach emphasizes engaging the denser, compressed snow near the lower end of the slope. Depending on the calculated force and system capacity, multiple rows may be concentrated within the lower portion of the roof. Because of the snowbank's cohesion and monolithic behavior, forces will be distributed uniformly to closely spaced rows.

"Since a snowbank compresses from gravity and its own weight," Haddock said. "It behaves as a cohesive, monolithic mass. Snow guards rely on the snowbank's compressive strength to restrain its movement. Density and compressive strength are greatest adjacent to the interface with the roof and toward the eave end. To be most effective, snow guards should be placed accordingly."

RESOURCES

- AceClamp - https://www.aceclamp.com
- Dynamic Fastener - https://www.dynamicfastener.com
- Levi's Building Components https://www.levisbuildingcomponents.com/
- S-5! - https://www.s-5.com

Account for Valleys and Roof Transitions

Valleys, dormers, and changes in roof height complicate placement by redirecting snow or creating areas of greater accumulation. Wasley recommends treating roof planes separately at valleys and transitions. Dormers and skylights interrupt the roof run and redirect load paths, requiring retention to work around the openings.

A higher roof adjoining a lower roof deserves particular attention. Webber said that greater height of adjacent structures increases the drift factor that must be evaluated, often requiring additional retention. Guards should be added along valley edges where needed to restrain snow while preserving a path for meltwater to drain.



All of these features belong in the measurements and roof drawings used to develop the layout in the first place, and once that is complete, no changes should be made without the structural engineer's approval.

Match the Attachment to the Roof

Standing seam and exposed fastener roofs require similar load calculations, but the connections carrying those loads may differ. Standing seam systems typically use clamps selected for the specific seam profile. Their performance depends on the clamp's compatibility with the seam and the panel's strength. Each system must be individually tested with the specific roof material, gauge thickness, brand of manufacture, and clamp's holding strength.

"Your snow attachment is only as good as the roof or seam it is attached to," said Wasley.

On exposed fastener roofs, brackets can penetrate the panel and transfer force into the structure or an approved substrate. Substrate thickness and fastener selection affect that connection, while proper sealing protects the penetrations. Martin emphasizes that the screws must be sealed correctly.

Haddock favors mechanical attachment for snow retention on all metal roofs, cautioning that "adhesive attachments will deteriorate over time, allowing guards to detach long before the roof reaches the end of its service life. Attachment durability is important," he said, "and should be considered along with load capacity during the selection process."

Coordinate with Other Rooftop Systems

Solar arrays, heat cable, and other rooftop equipment can affect the space available for snow retention. Wasley recommends allowing sufficient room between solar panels and the eave to install retention below the array. Planning that space early allows the retention layout and equipment locations to work together.

Haddock advises protecting heat cable from sliding snow, which can tear it loose. Heat cable is usually installed after the retention system, Webber added, and the rail can be used for cable attachment.

Existing systems also warrant attention. Wasley identifies bowed rails and missing or loose clamps or snow guards as signs that the attachment or layout needs reassessment. Repairing the visible damage should include checking whether the system was adequately designed for the load it needs to hold. ***MR***





Where Roofing Crews Lose Money

Labor cost doesn't disappear at the estimate. It disappears after the bid wins and the crew is on the roof.

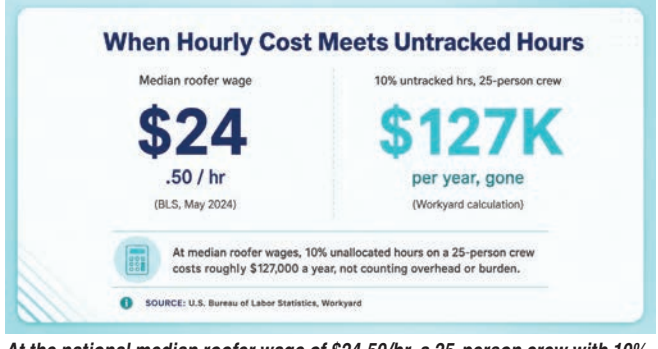
KITTISAK-STOCK.ADOBE.COM

By Alexandra De Bonis, Co-Founder and Head of Product, Workyard

Open any growth guide written for roofing contractors this year and you'll find the same ideas: better estimating software, sharper bidding tools, AI tools that show homeowners what the finished roof will look like. None of it addresses what happens on the job itself.

That's not an accident. Pre-job tools are easy to sell because they're easy to show. A bidding tool has a demo moment: type in a roof, get a number, the client approves it on the spot.

Field labor doesn't work that way. There's no visible payoff when a foreman's hours get coded to the right job. No number changes on a screen, no confirmation the customer sees. So the tools that manage the bid keep getting attention, and nobody looks at what happens once the crew is on the roof.



At the national median roofer wage of $24.50/hr, a 25-person crew with 10% of hours unallocated to a specific job loses roughly $127,000 a year. *SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS; WORKYARD.*

The Math Nobody Runs

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the median roofer wage at $24.50 an hour.[1] On a 25-person crew where 10% of hours go untracked, meaning no one can tie those hours to a specific job, that gap costs roughly $127,000 a year. As wages rise, that gap costs more every year.

According to a 2026 industry report on roofing labor costs, 55% of roofing contractors reported rising labor costs this year, with the average increase running 14%.[2]

Rising wages make that $127,000 gap larger every year. When hours are still logged by memory or written down at the end of shift, contractors pay more for hours they can't assign to a specific job or verify against their estimate.

Most contractors know their margins are tighter than they should be, but few can trace why.

What Leakage Looks Like in Practice

When I asked one general manager at a mid-size roofing and exteriors company how they found the gap, the answer was simple: they started tracking hours by job.[3] They found hours were off by roughly 30 minutes a day across 35 workers. No single cause. Just rounding at the end of a shift, drive time between jobs that nobody logged, lunch that ran long. Add it up across a full year and that company recovered close to $132,000 once they started capturing those hours accurately.

With job-level data in hand, they could finally separate estimating problems from field execution problems. Some jobs ran over because they were being bid too lean on labor. Others ran over because of field habits that were easy to fix once visible: drive time that wasn't being logged, shifts that ran slightly over without anyone recording the extra time. Before the data, both looked the same: lower margin than expected, with no obvious cause.

Any contractor running on blended margin numbers without job-level hour data is in the same position.

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Visibility Changes More Than the Timesheet

Another roofing industry client located in the Pacific Northwest had the same problem show up in dispatch rather than payroll.[4] The person managing their field operations described it directly: "I've saved a lot of time routing people by proximity and best-case scenario situations. I've never been able to do that before."

Before they had GPS visibility into where crews were during the day, their dispatcher assigned jobs by routine, sending the same crew to the same area regardless of where that crew was actually starting from that morning. The result was unnecessary travel time baked into every day.

Once the office could see each crew's real-time location, they assigned the nearest available crew to the next job instead. That change alone saved roughly 5,200 hours a year in travel time. At current 2026 labor rates, those 5,200 hours come to roughly $145,000 a year in recovered time.

The crew's skill didn't change; the season's workload didn't change. What changed was the information available to the person making the dispatch decision. GPS time tracking software is one way contractors are getting that information. But the tool is secondary. Contractors who track hours as work happens stop reconstructing them from memory after each shift.



55% of roofing contractors reported rising labor costs in 2026, up an average of 14%. One mid-size roofing and exterior contractor recovered $132,000 a year once untracked hours were made visible.
SOURCES: ROOFING CONTRACTOR 2026 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT; WORKYARD.

The Part Nobody Demos

The reason job-level hour tracking stays on the to-do list is the same reason the growth guides don't cover it: there's nothing to show. A software vendor can demo an estimating tool in five



minutes. Job-level hour tracking has no equivalent moment. It's unglamorous work, which means it gets skipped until someone runs the numbers and realizes what it's costing them.

Pre-job tools solve a real problem, and they deserve the attention they get. But an accurate bid only protects margin up to the point where the crew starts work. After that, the margin depends on whether the hours behind that bid are being captured by job, or whether they're disappearing into a gap nobody has measured yet.

What to Check This Week

Pick one crew and one week. Compare the hours on the schedule against what was actually logged on-site, using whatever method you use now. If the two numbers are close, you're ahead of most. If they're not, you now know where to look, and you have a sense of what closing that tracking gap is worth.

Alexandra De Bonis *is co-founder and Head of Product at Workyard [workyard.com]. Since co-founding Workyard, she has worked closely with thousands of construction professionals. Her focus is turning the everyday challenges faced by field teams and back-office staff into intuitive products that help businesses operate more efficiently and profitably.* **MR**

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The original roofs were replaced in the early twentieth century. More recently, those replacements had reached the end of their service lives as well. Replacing them while preserving the historical accuracy of the prominent Philadelphia building required significant planning and meticulous attention to detail by the parties involved.



The Philadelphia Contributionship recently replaced its failing roof with copper and slate. EDA Contractors Inc. served as the general contractor on the project. *ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE COPPER DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION AND THE PHILADELPHIA CONTRIBUTIONSHIP.*

From the outset, the project team was certain that copper was still the best material for restoring the building's roof. Among the reasons was the fact that copper naturally develops a protective patina, gradually changing from shiny to dark brown to patina green. Simulated copper-tone finishes cannot achieve an authentic appearance, especially as they develop.

"Copper is an absolutely excellent material," says Akul Modi, Vice President of Estimating & Business Development at EDA Contractors Inc., which served as the general contractor on the project. "When copper changes color, it has a significantly unique look that is different than any standard metal."

Pre-Construction Planning

The old roof was plagued by several persistent leaks, which was the primary driver behind the decision to replace rather than repair. EDA, copper and slate roofing installer BBCI, an EDA company, and roof consultants Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. (WJE) needed to retain the original look of the copper and slate roof as closely as possible. Any aesthetic changes would have to be approved by the Philadelphia Historical Commission.



The Philadelphia Contributionship's roof actually incorporates several historic roofing systems, including standing seam and flat seam copper alongside slate-clad mansard roofs. Besides the new copper flashings where the slate and copper meet, deteriorated copper fascia and crown molding along the west mansard were also replaced.

The roof's drainage system proved especially challenging. Because downspouts serving the standing seam copper roofs had to be routed over the steep-slope mansard slate roofs below, the team developed custom attachment details that maintained

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the slate's water-shedding integrity while ensuring water flowed efficiently from the upper roof areas to the drainage system below.

As Modi notes, while the project team was familiar with this scope of work and had certain expectations, the unknown is always a challenge. The project team understood the necessity to maintain the same appearance, but they were unsure of what they would find beneath the existing roof once construction commenced.

Fortunately, consultant WJE's preliminary attic survey determined that the roof's underlying wood framing and masonry were largely intact. That meant the team could focus on accurately recreating the historic roof rather than undertaking major structural repairs.

"We drafted all the details, all the transitions, where the slate meets copper, the flashings, expansion joints, and interfaces. Every detail was drafted on paper first as part of the shop drawing process," says Modi, who, as Lead Estimator and Project Manager, was significantly involved through all phases of the restoration's execution.

"The shop drawings were then submitted to the roof consultant [WJE] for what turned out to be several rounds of



review and updating to help ensure the design intent was met," he continues. "All parties were on the same page right from the start of construction on site."

Turning Drawings into Reality

Before installation began, the project team carefully reviewed shop drawings and 3D visuals of the building to ensure the design intent correctly met the technical necessities, especially at the critical transitions from slate to copper. Some in-situ test panels were also later reviewed by WJE to clarify appearance







(what the copper roof panels would look like), functionality, and potential alterations where needed.

"We made certain that the mechanics developing those test panels were the only ones working on the actual project, because it's a handcrafted material," says Modi. "Each individual has a different skill set for soldering. We used the skills of three or four sheet metal mechanics, all experts in soldering, to prepare the required soldering test panels. Once the panels were approved by the roof consultant and internally in our system, we ensured that only those workers would be soldering on site for quality assurance."

WJE ensured every aspect of the work was tested, reviewed, and approved before installation could take place on site — from standing seam roof pan installation, to base flashings and ridge flashings, to the roof's interface with the gutters.

Impressive Outcome

The Philadelphia Contributionship restoration project was distinguished by its technical complexity, extensive coordination across multiple trades and stakeholders, and meticulous planning and execution required to achieve a successful outcome. Through close collaboration between WJE, BBCI, and EDA, the project team addressed these challenges and delivered an impressive outcome.

"What made this project special," says Modi, "was not only the collaborations between the various teams, but also how the teams made all components of the roof and drainage system work together successfully." ***MR***

In recognition of this historical and meticulous restoration work in copper, the Philadelphia Contributionship was honored with a 2026 NACIA Award [https://copper.org/architecture-awards/].

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From Orlando to Louisville: METALCON Looks Ahead to 2027

METALCON marked its 35th anniversary in Orlando by bringing together manufacturers, contractors, architects, installers and other professionals from across the metal construction industry.

Held Oct. 7–9 at the Orange County Convention Center, the event featured 273 exhibiting companies, a 9.2% increase over 2025. Verified on-site attendance rose more than 5%, while total registration, including all participant categories, increased 9%.

"It's a great place to meet people, make connections, and, for us as a business, generate leads," said Tim Lindquist, regional director of FRAMECAD Americas.

Construction Outlook Points to Uneven Conditions Ahead

Economic keynote speaker Kermit Baker, former chief economist for the American Institute of Architects, provided a data-driven look at a construction market facing considerable uncertainty and significant differences among sectors.

He cited inflation, elevated borrowing costs, workforce constraints, project delays and rising material costs as ongoing pressures. Construction input costs increased nearly 9% over the previous year, with particularly steep increases in metals including steel, copper and aluminum.

Labor remains a major concern. Baker noted that 35% of the construction workforce is foreign-born, exceeding 50% in several trades, including roofing, while the workforce continues to age.

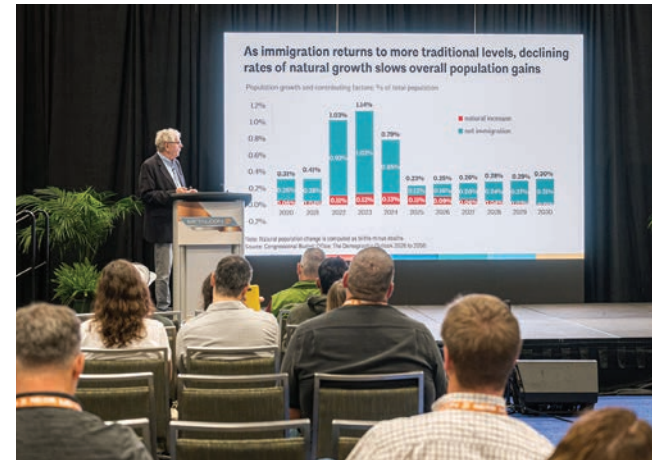
"Probably the greatest challenge facing the industry at present is the labor outlook," Baker said.

Uncertainty is also affecting the project pipeline. Architecture-firm data showed that roughly 30% of project volume had been delayed, stalled or canceled in the preceding six months, driven largely by client indecision, changing market conditions, insufficient budgets and financing challenges.

Opportunities, however, vary considerably by sector. Data centers remain one of the strongest areas of construction activity, fueled in part by investment in artificial intelligence.

"Data centers have been going nowhere but up; the sky seems to be the limit," Baker said, noting that data-center spending is expected to surpass traditional office construction spending by year-end.

Looking toward 2027, Baker offered a more measured outlook for construction overall. "These forecasters are projecting no increase in construction spending this year, only a modest gain next year," he said, adding that the projected gain would likely not keep pace with inflation.



In his economic keynote address, Kermit Baker, former chief economist for the American Institute of Architects, provided a data-driven look at the construction market. *PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEUBEK PHOTOGRAPHERS.*

Former MLB Pitcher Shares Lessons in Creativity, Accountability and Trust

Jim Abbott brought a different perspective to the keynote stage, sharing lessons from his career centered on three principles: creativity, accountability and trust.

Born without a right hand, Abbott learned early that achieving his goals often required a different approach. He connected creativity to finding another way when the conventional approach doesn't work. "You can do things differently in this world, and you can do them just as well as anybody else," he said.

He also emphasized accountability—making the most of what you've been given—and trusting in your preparation and abilities when the pressure is greatest.

Live Build Connects Innovation, Collaboration and Giving Back

The Design-to-Manufacture-to-Build Live experience brought participating manufacturers together to construct the frame of a 490-square-foot tiny home on the show floor in just three days, drawing attendees as the project progressed from design and engineering through automated manufacturing and live assembly.

The project showed what the industry can accomplish through collaboration while connecting design, manufacturing



METALCON's Judy Gellar presents a $4,000 donation to the Tunnel to Towers Foundation. *PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEUBEK PHOTOGRAPHERS.*

and construction in a real-world application. The home will be donated to a new Tunnel to Towers Veterans Village, reflecting METALCON's annual commitment to giving back. The show community also presented a $4,000 donation to the Tunnel to Towers Foundation in support of its work serving injured veterans, first responders and families of fallen service members.

METALCON Expands Practical Education and Access

New this year, the Latino Track brought Spanish-language education to a lineup of more than 35 credit-earning sessions, with technical, business and leadership programming supported by Spanish-language hands-on demonstrations in the METALCON Training Zone.

"METALCON created a stronger space for Latino contractors through Spanish-language education, networking and greater industry representation," said Amparo Sancen, founder of Latinos en Roofing and Sancen Contracting LLC. "Contractors from across the U.S. and Latin America came to learn about metal roofing, explore business opportunities and connect with manufacturers and industry leaders. It was an important step in introducing more Latino contractors to the metal industry and helping them grow, diversify and better serve their customers. I'm excited to see the Latino Track grow even bigger next year in Louisville!"

FORGE Builds Connections Across the Industry

FORGE, METALCON's expanded program for women in the industry, brought together professionals at different stages of their careers for leadership insight, candid conversation and networking.

"In an industry where we're often the only woman at the table, connecting with dozens of women at FORGE who've faced the same challenges, celebrated the same wins, and understood the world of metal construction was energizing," said Lee Ann Slattery, sales support manager at ATAS International and the first woman to chair the Metal Construction Association. "The conversations were honest, the connections genuine, and I left with fresh perspectives and a network I'm already leaning on.

40 Under 40 Looks Ahead to 2027

The inaugural Metal Construction 40 Under 40 Recognition Program honored 40 professionals whose work is influencing jobsites, fabrication, engineering, design and other areas of the industry. Honorees were recognized onsite and connected during the Future Leaders Happy Hour. METALCON plans to bring 40 Under 40 back in 2027

"METALCON's strength is bringing the people who design, manufacture, specify and install metal construction products together under one roof," said Judy Geller, vice president of trade shows at PSMJ, producers of METALCON. "After 35 years, learning from one another, finding solutions and building business relationships continues to make the show valuable."

METALCON 2027 takes place Oct. 26-28 at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville, Kentucky. Louisville offers plenty to explore beyond the show floor, from iconic Churchill Downs and Kentucky bourbon experiences to the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory. ***MR***



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Tools of the Trade

6 Questions to Ask Before Buying Software for your Fabrication Shop

By Katy Rebernak, Head of Metal Roofing Initiatives, Surface Bid by SmartBuild Systems

In the age of A.I., just about anyone can "vibe code" software. This means new start-ups are popping up faster than whack-a-mole promising to solve all the woes of your metal shop. We're all business people and know, time is money.

But faster is not the same as right. A bad number delivered quickly is still a bad number, and in metal, where panels are cut to length and mistakes show up as a truck full of material that doesn't fit, the cost of being wrong is high. On the other hand, good software changes the game and sets up your business to gain an advantage.

Whether you are looking at a design tool, material take-off calculator, or a CRM, these are the six questions worth asking before you buy.

1) Do you have other customers in metal fabrication?

We all know this business is a different animal. You can't just buy an extra bundle of shingles if a job's estimate is off. Waste is costly. Every job is unique.

Software that assumes the metal process is identical to any other construction vertical: HVAC, plumbing, or even asphalt roofing, means you might spend extra time working around your tool instead of in it. When a company offers to give you a demo, ask to view the workflow for metal roofing. Don't sign up for a generic workflow.

In addition, accuracy matters. If the tool shows dimension data, ask about rounding. Ask where the numbers come from and what happens to them between the source and your screen.

Also ask how they will use your product lines, system assemblies, and building practices. You're in business for a reason. You offer unique quality that no one else does. Make sure your tool allows you to showcase that instead of flattening you into defaults.

2) How did you validate your claims or value proposition?

Every sales deck says "cut your estimating time by 80 percent" or "eliminate errors." Ask how they know. Was that number measured with real customers?

One more thing to listen for: how they describe what the software does not do. No one tool can solve world peace. Exaggerated claims are a red flag.

3) How long does it take your typical user to onboard?

"You'll be up and running in a day" is a phrase to be careful with. If a tool is going to carry your products, your pricing, and your building preferences, somebody has to put all of that in. That takes real time, and it should.

Ask who does that work. Does the vendor set it up with you, or do they hand you a help article? Ask how many hours of your team's time it will take, not just the vendor's. Ask what "live" actually means, whether it is a login or a first real job out the door.

Fast onboarding is not always a good sign. It often means the software is not learning anything specific about your business. On the other hand, watch out for tools that are so customizable your new hires can't learn the basics in under a week. As we said, time is money.

4) What happens if my business operates a little differently than your standard set-up?

Every shop has a thing it does its own way, whether that is the employee who is a jack-of-all trades, how pricing is managed, or how you build the roof system.

Ask the vendor to walk through one of your real jobs, a weird one, not the clean example. Then ask directly: is that a configuration change or would you need to ask a developer to make that change? Both answers are ok, as long as you know what you are getting day one.

5) What happens if I need support? Are there any hidden costs?

Get specific. For support, ask: who answers, how fast, what are your hours? Is it a person who understands metal, or a ticket queue? Is there a limit on how often you can call?

Some firms will charge extra if your team needs training. Some charge you if you add a new product line. Ask what happens if you want to connect it to your ERP, because that is almost always scoped as its own project and priced separately. None of these are necessarily bad. Surprises are bad.

6) How do you protect my company information? Do you analyze my data?

Your pricing, your customer list, and your job history are some of the most valuable things your business owns. Before you load them into someone else's system, ask: Do you use my data to sell insights to anyone else? The answer should be unequivocally "no" and you should see that in the contract, not just in the sales call. A vendor who says "we take security very seriously" and changes the subject should give you pause.

The summary:

The right tool, set up properly can completely change your business's efficiency and profitability. Ask these six questions up front and you will know pretty quickly whether you are talking to a partner who understands metal or a start-up that just learned how to spell *rollformer*. ***MR***


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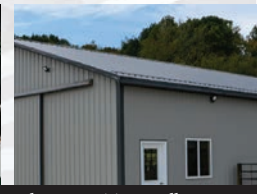

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project of the month



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Roof Panels: 1" Fastener Flange Standing Seam
Coating: Kynar
Ventilation: Soffit & Ridge vent
Underlayment: CMI Secure Grip Max
Sealant: Novaflex

After the home's original roof and wood siding were severely damaged by hail, the homeowners chose to upgrade to more durable, energy-efficient materials. Green Knight Metal Roofing installed a Sheffield Metals 1-inch Fastener Flange Snap-Lock standing-seam metal roof. We also replaced the damaged wood siding with Vicwest Bellara steel wall cladding in Ebony, providing a low-maintenance, long-lasting exterior that complements the new roof and eliminates the need for future wood-panel replacement and painting. ***MR***

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