



"... a fabulous

ifiers. Explains Kyle: "Contractors are busy running their businesses. The EPA Act of 1992 did very little to impact the way roofing contractors manage their companies – except those few that were aware of the Energy Savings Performance Contracts and pursued that avenue. But in general, there was a lack of promotion back then; there was no outreach to educate the customers."

There was, indeed, scant little promotion back then but after languishing for a while, the concept recently has begun to enjoy a substantial increase in awareness. The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers has revised its energy efficiency standards to reflect the energy saving benefits of reflective roofing. There's the two-year-old Georgia White Roof Amendment, and the American Forests and Department of Energy Cool Communities Program. NASA is conducting relevant testing. Green building and urban heat islands were hot topics at the recent American Institute of Architects and Construction Specifications Institute trade shows. And now on the heels of the actual Energy Star Roof Products Program is the executive order that more than 500,000 government buildings are required to reduce their energy consumption by as much as 30 percent to 35 percent by 2010. All of these efforts will help boost awareness of these issues among our industry's key participants.

So what is the reaction so far among contractors? They seem to be divided into two camps. There are those who shrug their shoulders and say that they've heard about it a little bit and it sounds good and all, but it isn't something that's going to have any

The Energy Star Roof Products Program seems to be off to a promising, if unspectacular, beginning. Those who have picked up on it are quite enthusiastic about its potential; others view it as a marketing tool that really doesn't mean much to their companies' particular market situations and strategies.

The U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency together introduced the Energy Star Roof Products Program earlier this year to promote the use of products that help save energy. The program awards the Energy Star label to products that demonstrate minimum solar reflectance properties. Low-slope roofing products must have an initial solar reflectance of at least 0.65 (0.5 after three years); steep-slope roofing products must have initial solar reflectances no less than 0.25 (0.15 after three years). The most common types of reflective roofing products that qualify for the Energy Star label are white single-plyes, metal and roof coating products.

Roger Kyle, vice president, roof asset management, of Integrated Roofing & Waterproofing Inc., headquartered in Houston, checks off the program's four "obvious benefits to our customers." He points out that by using Energy Star roof products, "We're reducing energy costs of buildings by decreasing the amount of heat transferred to the interior; we're decreasing pollution because we can burn less fossil fuels; we're reducing the heat island effect, thereby decreasing cooling demands and pollution; and we're prolonging the service life of the roofing system."

Terrific advantages, indeed. Also, nothing new really; manufacturers of reflective roofing products have been promoting these benefits for nearly 20 years – with varying degrees of success. But the buzz has been getting louder of late and awareness is picking up.

This recent groundswell can trace its roots back to the Energy Policy Act of 1992 – a fairly well-kept secret that didn't do much to affect the decision-making of contractors, building owners or spec-

tool that's been extremely underutilized ..."

affect on their businesses. Then there are those who feel the Energy Star program is going to be the next big thing and they're concentrating all their resources to get going with it.

So who's right? They both probably are – depending on their marketing strategies.

Steve Wann, president of Pioneer Roofing Systems Inc., Lorton, Va., conveys his company's experience: "We've been doing these white roofs for 15 years and we always pushed the white membranes – at first because they help limit thermal shock to the roofing system. We sold the energy-saving concept idea sort of as, 'Oh, and by the way, you get this little bonus of energy savings.' The past couple years, we've all seen these urban heat island studies, so it's being talked about more and more. We put more emphasis on it with our clients now and they are starting to become a little more familiar with it. I think this is going to be huge – especially in the South. We're making Energy Star one of our main selling points because our target market is the long-term building owner."

A while back the EPA was gathering background information on reflective roofs and a representative called Pioneer Roofing for input, which it provided. "A little bit later," relates Wann, "the representative called me back and she asked, 'Steve, have you ever gone back to a customer and confirmed what the real dollar savings was as a result of the roofing job?'" He told her of one particular job Pioneer did – putting a white single-ply down on a school in Alexandria, Va. "The school people told us that this building was the largest utility-use facility they had at the time," notes

Wann. "It was a 100,000 sq. ft. roof on a one-story building that had a black existing roof. The school system was into the Energy Star program and they tracked cooling days and heating days and cost per BTU – the whole nine yards. I talked to the man in charge at the school and he said, 'Steve, with just the replacement of the roof – no window work, no insulation or heating and cooling work – our bills, which averaged \$120,000 a year, dropped to \$80,000.' That school is saving \$40,000 a year; the roof only cost \$400,000. They'll pay for the roof in 10 years based on utility bills alone."

The vast majority of Pioneer Roofing's work is negotiated. Wann says he prefers working directly for owners and that "trying to convince building owners that it's worth paying extra because we're a better contractor with a better system is only going to get us so far. If we can show them we'll save them a small fortune down the road, it's a lot easier to sell them a higher-end system. When dealing with customers who plan to maintain a building, it's a fabulous marketing tool that has been extremely underutilized by the industry. Our intention is to really push this. I'm kicking myself for not getting involved with this energy savings aspect five years earlier."

Wann points out a key aspect to this program – owners who are going to keep and maintain the building, which often isn't the case. An Energy Star roof is definitely a higher-end upsell, and it's a tough sell to an owner who figures to flip the building in relatively short order. As one noted consultant puts it: "Right now I've got enough trouble trying to get people to put any insulation

in their roof, let alone worry about upgrading the reflectivity."

So there's a need to "educate the customer." Sound familiar?

"Education and communication are the big challenges in this," stresses Butch Lockhart, chief operating officer at Integrated Roofing & Waterproofing. "This program gives contractors an excellent opportunity to provide much-needed education to building owners, thereby differentiating themselves in their marketplace, and at the same time, uncovering a new profit center opportunity. If a contractor is fully knowledgeable about these energy savings programs, he's clearly separated himself from the pack. And it's a tool to establish a much stronger, long-term relationship that can be most helpful when the owner has other roofing work that may or may not be Energy Star-related."

And Lockhart stresses that "fully knowledgeable" qualification. If you sell a job based on significant energy savings, those savings better be there for the owner. "Contractors need to do their homework and be sure they know all elements of the program before they jump into it and start quoting," he cautions.

For a lot of contractors and building owners, the Energy Star program doesn't help them at this point – that may or may not change. But for those on the leading edge of the program, or those thinking about becoming involved, there seems to be some solid potential. The early returns are positive. There is a long way to go, but there's enough upside that this might become a significant factor in the industry.

For more information on the Energy Star Roof Products Program, call 1-888-STAR-YES; or check out www.energystar.gov. **CG**