



The **10** Biggest Mistakes

From a Roofing Consultants Perspective

Roofing replacement and other large waterproofing projects are generally the most costly projects that association boards face. Such projects are done only occasionally at an association. Because of the importance and cost of such work, boards need to avoid as many complications as possible. This article covers the ten biggest mistakes a board can make in initiating such projects.

1 Soliciting Bids Without Specifications

This mistake results in bids that cannot be compared, causing confusion and poor decision making. A specification can be as small as one page for a small project and could be prepared by a professional community manager. But it must be complete and detailed for large projects (prepared by an architect or roofing consultant). The job specifications should be prepared only after the final product selection is made. Product manufacturers' specifications are generic and cannot contain all the special details that every project has. The details are critical for roofing projects.

Even better is to have the association attorney write the contract. Roofing can be more complex than other types of work, especially related to warranties. A roofing contract is usually the largest one an HOA will ever have to sign.

2 Signing a Contract Prepared By a Contractor Without Consulting the Association's Legal Counsel

This mistake is made by many associations attempting to save money. All major contracts should have, at minimum, a thorough review and comment by counsel.

3 Asking the Manager to be the Project Manager For a Major Construction Project

Community managers are well trained in the duties of association management, especially those who have earned their professional designation.

However, there is no formal training for them in management of construction projects. It takes years of training and experience to be a competent construction manager.

Many of the largest management firms have a policy against their managers performing project management for construction due to high liability exposure for the firm.

4 Giving Large Advance Deposits for Materials to Contractors

Many associations are led to believe they are obligated to give contractors material deposits before starting the project. This is a mistake that can place the association's funds in jeopardy. All successful contractors have credit accounts with their suppliers, usually for 30 days or more. If a bidder cannot fund its payroll until the first payment, the association should reconsider doing business with that company.

5 Making Progress Payments Based on Percentage of Completion Instead of Measurable Completed Work

Measuring the amount of progress in percentage is difficult for both parties, especially for the association and its manager. A good rule is to pay only for pre-agreed benchmarks of construction completed and materials verified onsite.

6 Failure to Start Planning 3 - 5 Years in Advance of Need

This is a common mistake, and there are many reasons this can happen. Five years is not too early to start planning a major roof project. Better planning can help to limit or eliminate emergency assessments, disgruntled members and excess cost, not to mention delay causing high emergency repair costs.

7 Accepting the Lowest Bid Without Evaluating All Bids Including Interviews with Bidders

Associations try to save themselves personal time by simply selecting the low bid, assuming all contractors are the same and bids are the same, which is not true. The lowest bid may have critical exclusions that could result in the highest final cost.

8 Believing that City Inspectors Will Validate the Installation

The typical city permit/inspection service is limited to a structural wood inspection and a final (completed) inspection. Seldom do the city inspectors make sufficient job-in-progress visits to verify the work is done per code or manufacturer's specifications. Further, city inspectors may not actually go up on the roof.

9 Making the Final Payment Without Obtaining the Closeout Documents (Permit, Warranty, Lien Releases)

The closeout documents should be demanded and a final payment withheld until they are in the manager's hands and verified correct for the project. There are two kinds of warranties: workmanship and product, and they are different documents. Nearly all local city or county building departments provide a signed-off permit card when they are notified the roof is done.

10 Assuming All Roofs Are Equal and All Contractors Are Equal

All roofs are custom fabricated onsite to some degree or other. Most roofs are assembled one nail at a time by a real person with tools. Installers have their good and bad days like all humans. Roofs of the same brand and type may be installed quite differently by contractors. Metal flashings can vary widely from contractor to contractor and they are critical for the waterproofing. Reusing metal components is sometimes suggested as a way to reduce the roof cost, but it is a poor idea. Actually, these components are some of the lowest-cost parts of the roofing system.

The Bottom Line

- Get a current roof survey by an independent roof professional to start the process.
- Retain professional help (roof consultant or architect) for guidance with product selection.
- Obtain complete custom specifications for your project, not generic specifications.
- Obtain bids from pre-qualified contractors who have experience with the product you have selected.
- Obtain a roofing contract from your attorney or the roofing professional.
- Arrange for independent service to monitor the contractor and approve the work. ⚙️

This article was written and submitted by Carl Brown, RCI, RRO. Carl is with AWS Roofing Consultants.
