



ROOF MANAGEMENT: 7 KEYS TO COMPARING COMMERCIAL RE-ROOFING PROPOSALS

If it's time to replace your commercial roof, you have a big decision to make — who will do the work?

When it comes down to deciding between two or more bids, there's a lot more to look at than the cost. It's important to evaluate each proposal in its entirety and compare proposals apples-to-apples.

Here are seven things to look at so you can make the best choice for your building and your business goals:

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1. Review each contractor's history

Ideally, you will have gotten re-roofing proposals from contractors who have been recommended to you by people you respect. But it's best to do some additional research on them anyway. Look at their websites, LinkedIn pages, trade association memberships, and Google them, of course — and pay particular attention to the number of years they've been in business.

Choose a contractor that's been operating at least five years so you have some reassurance it's not a fly-by-night company.

Your best bet is a contractor with a minimum of 10 years experience because that's enough time for them to have made it through some rough spots and develop expertise with different kinds of roofs, properties and problems.

Also keep in mind that the longer a company has been in business the more it usually cares about its reputation. Contractors should be eager to provide you with a list of past projects and references, and have testimonials that are from actual people (first and last names).

2. Compare insurance coverage

Every roofing contractor needs to have commercial general liability insurance to cover bodily injury, property damage and business interruption at your location in case something catastrophic happens. The size of your project doesn't matter when it comes to the amount of insurance coverage — the amount should correlate with the potential risk, including fire and water damage.

Each re-roofing proposal should include a job-specific certificate of insurance (COI) that shows the amount of insurance. For commercial roofing projects, look for liability limits of \$5 million or more. [Workers' Compensation](#) covers employees who are injured at work, which doesn't affect your company from a cost perspective but it's important for different reasons.

3. Check the contractor's EMR — safety matters

The number of Workers Comp claims a contractor has made recently should be part of your decision-making process. A roofing contractor's EMR, or [Experience Modification Rate](#), is a rating based on the number of Workers Comp claims the company made as compared to others in the same industry. The lower the EMR, the better. Choose a contractor with an EMR that's under 1.0 and



reports its EMR within its proposal.

A contractor's EMR also gives you insight into how the contractor operates its business. A low number can tell you the company cares about its employees and follows safety best practices — setting up safety equipment, using harnesses and other safety gear, and training everyone on the latest precautions and techniques. These activities take time and vigilance so a higher EMR may indicate that a contractor cut corners regarding safety and possibly in other areas as well.

4. Compare how each contractor defines the scope of work

Make sure each re-roofing proposal defines your project correctly and proposes a solution that solves your problem and matches your stated goals. It's not a good proposal if the scope of work isn't what you asked for or need. It's also not a good sign if a proposal fails to describe the project in detail, including line items that spell out every step and material that will be used.

As you know, the devil can be in the details so if you go with a skimpy proposal be prepared to end up with something you hadn't planned on getting, possibly added costs.

Not every contractor that doesn't provide a lot of line items is low-balling the bid — but you can be confident the opposite is true.

If a re-roofing proposal includes everything that's needed to complete the job end-to-end, that's an estimate you can rely on.

Look for proposals that give you a fixed price and clearly identify any items that are variable, such as the amount of plywood needed for decking replacement. Rates for variables and any hidden conditions should be established up front.

If you have changes to the scope or want to make adjustments after reviewing the proposal, the contractor should be glad to participate in an iterative process with you and revise the initial proposal to get you a final bid.

Whoever you hire should stand by their final bid, keeping in mind that a true fixed-price estimate will include contingencies and therefore may be higher than estimates that aren't fixed price.

5. Evaluate the specific materials each contractor proposes

The materials included in each proposal make a big difference and

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you can't compare apples-to-apples on price if proposals call for different grade materials. Pay particular attention to the roofing membrane. Lower-tier membranes, for example, cost a lot less than higher-tier membranes, can fail sooner or more often and have shorter warranties. If your project calls for a lower-tier material to meet your goals then that's fine, but if your goals include a more durable product that lasts longer, make sure that's what you're getting.

Another materials-related aspect to review is the proposed R-value, or amount of thermal resistance you'll get from the proposed insulation.

The R-value code varies by state but if your property is in Georgia, the thermal code is R-20, which is 3.5 inches of polyisocyanurate, or polyiso or ISO (rigid foam insulation). If you tear off a roof and remove the insulation, you'll need to add the right amount back again to meet code, which may be more than the amount removed. Even if all of your existing insulation can be reused, you may still need to add more insulation to meet updated building codes. Make sure the proposed roofing systems include the correct R-value, keeping in mind that not including enough insulation makes bids lower.

If a contractor tells you the updated code is overkill, be aware this contractor isn't following best practices and won't be able to get you the best warranty.

6. Compare warranty type and length

Warranties are written guarantees that have financial value so the warranty that each re-roofing proposal offers can be a clear differentiator. There are several [different kinds of manufacturer warranties](#) available ranging from 10-30 years (although some are even shorter or longer) depending on the materials used, types of fasteners, wall details, and other specifics.

There are more than one way to get to a specific length warranty — your contractor should have discussed these options with you before submitting the proposal because warranty length should be based on your goals for the property and your business preferences. Each proposal should also include a roofing contractor warranty, which is usually between one and five years.

Here are samples of popular manufacturer warranties from [Firestone Red Shield warranties](#) and [GAF warranties](#). To get a [Firestone](#) or [GAF](#) warranty, your system must be installed by a



certified installer. Look for a copy of the contractor's certification document within the proposal.

If a proposal doesn't include a manufacturer warranty or offers a very short one, that's a red flag, especially for a flat roof. Even though you have to pay a nominal amount for a warranty (usually between \$750 and \$2,000 to cover the inspections), having an experienced third party inspect your roofing system inspections is a smart business move. Your contractor should welcome inspections.

7. Evaluate the proposal presentation itself

While it might seem that what a proposal looks like physically shouldn't matter, it does. The effort contractors make in presenting a proposal — whether they deliver a couple of pages or a comprehensive document with all the needed addendums — foreshadows their approach to doing the work.

If a proposal includes things like photos of your existing roof, diagrams or cross-section illustrations, information about edge and gutter installation, and details about safety procedures specific to your project, you can feel confident your re-roofing project has been carefully assessed and planned. And that the price is accurate.

What do you do if two or more re-roofing proposals are almost identical?

If the solutions, pricing, processes, insurance, safety records, warranties, and past quality of work are all pretty much the same, choose the proposal from the contractor you trust the most. Follow your gut.

Sentry Roof Services earns a lot of business from clients who follow their guts. Often we have been referred to the project by another client or a roofing consultant, or it's a new project for a current client. While it helps the decision-making process to have first-hand or second-hand knowledge of past performance, that alone will rarely, if ever, close a deal. Proposals are critical.

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procedure for proposals we make sure clients can check off all of the necessary boxes regarding risk and reliability as well, from general liability insurance (\$10 million coverage) and a super-low EMR (currently 0.8) to certifications from the top material manufacturers, [GAF Master Select™ Roofer](#) and [Firestone Master Contractor](#).

If you're interested in talking with Sentry Roof about an upcoming re-roofing project, we invite you to give us a call. Even if you already have re-roofing proposals from other contractors and have a question about how to compare them, we still invite you to call. We're glad to help you make good decisions about your commercial roof.

Sentry Roof Services is a full-service commercial and industrial roofing contractor in metro Atlanta that helps clients manage every type of commercial roof. From repairs and preventative maintenance to re-roofing and new-roof installation, clients choose Sentry because they trust our expertise and value our advice. Our goal is to help clients meet their goals — whether that's having the most modern roof or extending the life of their existing roof (or something in between) — we provide the accurate information they need to make informed decisions. Then we do the work and stand behind it.

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SENTRY ROOF
SERVICES, LLC

www.sentryroof.com

5430 Buford Highway
Norcross, GA 30071
(678) 301-5555

