



An open letter to the roofing industry concerning proposed code change 2311.

Most roofing contractors in Florida and most likely in the United States are unaware that proposed changes to the International Building Code (IBC) eliminates the use of gravel as a roof covering; this code change would have a major impact on our business as ninety percent of the roofing systems that our company has installed in the past twenty-five years are gravel covered to protect the roof from ultraviolet and other damage. I hope after reading this letter that other roofing contractors and those involved in the roofing industry would also challenge this code change.

My first question is why this change is taking place without input from the roofing industry? I read most of the trade magazines related to our business and very little has been written about eliminating gravel covered roofs; these roofs have a very long and successful history. There needs to be major discussions within the roofing industry before such a change is made.

The second big question is where is the science behind this change? In my twenty-seven years in the roofing business I have rarely heard of any gravel related problems; I don't have any idea what the problems and concerns are behind this major building code change.

I would like to relate my experience with the millions of square feet of gravel covered roofs that our company has installed. We keep accurate records that enable us to back up all of our claims. I would welcome anyone who would like to survey our roofs where we use one-half inch limestone gravel that lays loose on the surface. This gravel is on roofs with no parapets, various parapet heights, and even some low sloped roofs; most are commercial or industrial applications and many of these roofs went through Hurricane Andrew in the early '90s. Many of our roofs in the Martin & Saint Lucie County area of Florida went through three hurricanes within two years; one being a category three storm. What I found after all of this "real world" abuse is that gravel

covered roofs perform great. The only damage noted was nothing more than minor gravel scouring on the roof corners; the gravel did not become windborne leaving a bare unprotected roof surface. I have found that gravel covered roofs stand up well in high wind conditions and recommend our gravel covered roofs now more than ever.

I still haven't been able to understand why IBC wants to totally eliminate gravel covered roofs. I admit there are roofs where gravel does not belong; wouldn't it make more sense to use good science and determine where and how gravel should be used instead of eliminating it completely? It would make sense to not allow it in a downtown area with lots of glass but why not allow it in a warehouse district with minimal windows? Gravel size is also a factor; pea gravel isn't used in any of our applications because it can become windborne.

Has the economic affects of this change been considered? This change would adversely affect any roofing contractor and building owner involved with gravel covered roofs. A major economic impact would be to the building owners who could no longer have a roof system that has been proven to perform for more than 25 years with minimal maintenance.

Many of our clients have shopping centers, office buildings, and warehouses that total millions of square feet of roofing. Prior to the advent of graveled polyurethane spray foam roofs, owners had to budget for a re-roof every ten to fifteen years; with gravel covered spray foam roofs their long-term roofing costs are fifty to sixty percent less due to the longevity, low maintenance, and the protection provided by graveled foam. This is not just sales hype; we can prove what we say with real science & economics.

My point is that before code changes eliminate gravel roofs and along with it our business, the need for these changes should be proven. If our experience here in hurricane alley is a fluke, then please show us the real science before putting us out of business.

Gene Whiting, President, Whiting Construction Inc., Palm City, FL. May 14, 2007